

### **A matter of life and death- Read: Phil 18b-26**

We come across some uncertainty in Paul as he debates the benefits of both life and death. At another level, however, his future circumstances are entirely certain...since he knows whether by life or by death Christ will be exalted... and this is the crux of the passage that Christ be exalted by the advancement of the Gospel... and for Paul this is the most important thing. Getting Paul's perspective should inspire us to see Christ exalted in our own lives.

### **Don't mention the 'D' word**

We live in a culture that thinks of physical death with such dread that society's highest goal is the postponement of death for as long as possible. Because of our culture we may find Paul's notion that remaining alive is a sacrifice and execution a gain a difficult one to understand.

Perhaps more than any time in history, the church needs to adopt Paul's perspective on life and death. It is tempting for the believer to live as if there were nothing beyond the grave. The danger is this turns us into a safe, risk adverse people. This can only cause us to clutch our material possessions all the more tightly for the security they can give and keep us from risking our lives in the service of God.

Ultimately Paul hopes for the outcome that best serves the advancement of the Gospel. But he knows that if he was to be executed that he would know fellowship with Christ. Death would be a gain because it would mean the closest possible union with Christ.

As Christians there is no need to fear death. Like Paul, we know the end of the story. We know that one day we too will be with Christ forever; we know that death isn't the end... if anything it's the beginning. Death holds no fear, death isn't the end... death has been defeated when Jesus rose again on the cross.

### **To live is Christ**

#### **Mission in our DNA**

For Paul, its knowing how the story ends that propels him into mission ... to live is Christ.

Paul's drive and obsession was for the gospel. We too need to live with this eternal perspective so that we too may be propelled into mission. We know the end of the story... that one day there will be a union between us and Christ – described as a wedding feast. For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Rev 19.

Paul's relationship with Christ was so close his whole life derived its meaning from his lord BUT if by staying and supporting the Philippians the gospel can be advanced then it's better for him to remain. The plumbline for life's big decisions was does it serve the Gospel?

#### **Mission in Adversity**

Paul is described as a man in chains for the Gospel...To be a people of mission will have its challenges, difficulties and even persecution. Many people are willing to risk their lives for a meaningful adventure. What Jesus is calling us to is far more meaningful than any other adventure: Are you ready to risk your life for the adventure that Jesus is calling us to? Or will you play it safe? When we get to that wedding day surely we will say 'It was so worth it!'

#### **Mission in Partnership**

Paul makes this call to remain out of a deep love and desire for the Philippians to serve them and see them grow in their faith and for the gospel to progress... Throughout Paul's letter he uses terms such as 'in his heart', 'affection', 'brothers', 'partnership in the gospel', 'Paul and Timothy servants'. We're called to be a 'partnership of servants'... furthering the gospel together.

1. Do you feel uncomfortable talking about death?
2. Are you afraid of death?
3. Was Paul odd to find death an attractive option?
4. What plumbines do you have in your life? What dictates your decision making?
5. How have you made decisions to honour God in your life?
6. Have you ever encountered opposition for being a Christian?
7. Have you ever played it safe rather than standing up for Christ?
8. How is partnership in the Gospel worked out in your cell group? What do you do together?