

## One Life

### 1. Intro & Context

- Apostle Paul is in prison, probably in Rome and he's writing to his friends from the church in Philippi that he planted some 10 years before hand, thanking them for their partnership in the gospel
- And what is clear from the letter is ...
  - Paul is facing a terrible trial
  - In chains, in prison ... on death row
- But not only that ...
  - Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles
  - His job was to go and plant churches
- Yet here he is in prison
  - Career on the skids
  - Facing trial and possible execution
  - Life in the balance
- And yet he's rejoicing! He's full of joy!
  - v4 – *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy*
  - v18 – *And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice*
  - And he repeats this sentiment throughout the letter
- And so, despite his circumstances, he's not discouraged > he's not in despair
  - How does he do that?
  - What's working for him that makes that a reality?
- It's because he's worked out a meaning and purpose for life that means his joy doesn't depend on
  - the circumstances of his life ...
  - whether things are going well
  - being blessed with wealth, health and happiness
  - It's grounded in something much deeper, and more profound
  - And something infinitely more stable than the circumstances of our life
- Friends ... what about you?
  - What gives your life meaning and purpose?
  - What's the thing that gives you joy?
  - What's that thing that makes your life worthwhile ... regardless of what else happens?
- Here in Philippians Paul is saying

- “Even though I don’t know whether I’ll die tomorrow or live another 20 years ... it doesn’t matter because it’s doesn’t affect the thing in life brings me joy”
- “That which I live for isn’t touched by what I am going through”
- You and I have one life
  - We don’t know how short or long it will be
  - We don’t know before-hand what difficulties, tragedies or circumstances life will throw at us
- Wouldn’t it be good to be able to live the one life God gives us ... knowing and experiencing joy, regardless of the circumstances of life
- As we look at this passage this morning ... we’ll see how Paul did it
  - And as we do that ... we’ll see how we might do it also

## PRAY

### 2. One life of joy

- Here’s what Paul says ...
  - *v12 – Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*
- It’s apparent the Philippians are discouraged and concerned for Paul because of circumstances he’s in
  - Paul was the great architect / the leader / entrepreneur of the biggest movement in the history of the world
  - He has such skill, leadership qualities, convictions and trust in God ... that he would turn up in any city in the Greco-Roman world, set up shop, start preaching the gospel ...
  - And after a while there’d be so many converts he could leave a church there
  - And he did that all over the Mediterranean
  - He was an incredible leader and church planter
- But the Philippians are discouraged, because they see that he’s in prison
  - Here he is in the middle of a career ... and it looks like his life is about to end
  - Think of all the great things he could do > how much more he could achieve in life
  - And yet he’s in chains so he can’t do his work

- And not only that ... he's in danger of being executed
- Not only do they have deep affection for Paul and his wellbeing
  - But they'd also be wondering why God would allow this to happen to Paul
  - It's just doesn't make sense
  - He's the Apostle to the Gentiles!
  - Surely it'd be better for God's plans and purposes that he'd be out preaching and planting more churches
  - "God what are you doing? Why are you allowing this?"
- But Paul doesn't think like that?
  - He's not concerned ... in fact he **rejoices** despite what he's going through
- So he says in v12
  - "I want you to see, that even though it looks bad ... it's actually turned out for the spread of the gospel"
- Why?
  - *v13 – As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.*
  - Everyone, in the prison and 'everyone else' presumably is 'everyone else' in the city ... knows Paul's there because of Jesus
  - That is, because of the gospel he's been preaching
    - "Hey what's this Paul fella in prison for?"
    - "Because he's been telling everyone about this guy called Jesus who was resurrected from the dead"
- So, the word has got around to everyone about Paul and the message of the gospel he's been proclaiming
- And the impact Paul's boldness is having on everyone ... then becomes and encouragement to the other Christians there in the city ... to be bold in proclaiming the gospel too
  - *v14 – Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.*
- Now Paul wants to plant churches
  - He would never have planned a mission to those in that prison unless God had wanted him to
  - But now he's got a captive audience to for him to share the gospel
  - Every day there's a bunch of guards looking after this guy who just so happens to be the most gifted evangelist the world has ever known

- And one by one they're converted!
- See the irony in that
  - The very people who are trying to silence Paul and do away with him are forced to guard him for hours at a time ... and in the meantime ... Paul's just sitting there saying "morning fellas, good to see you again today ... the lets pick up where we left off yesterday ... you see after Jesus was crucified by your buddies ..."
- And Paul would have been thinking
  - *"You know what ... I wouldn't have planned this ... but I can see how God is using me and my circumstances for the advance of the gospel and for his glory"*
- And because of that he's full of joy

### 3. One life of mission

- How can Paul be filled with joy in circumstance like this?
- I mean ... how would you feel if
  - You were in prison
  - Career was over
  - Isolated from friends and family
  - People were trying to bring you down and make life hard for you?
- I don't know about you ... but I'd be saying
  - "God what are you doing?"
  - "Are you really for me God?"
  - "Do you really care about what I'm going through?"
- The reason for Paul's joy in the midst of all that is
  - because of what he sees his purpose in life is
  - because of the thing that gives his life meaning
- You see what he says in v21
  - "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain"
- For Paul ... his mission in life is to live for Christ
  - That is ...
    - his whole purpose in living
    - his life's goal is
      - to live for Jesus ...
      - to honour Jesus ...
      - to glorify Jesus ...

- to proclaim Jesus ...
- to see people come to believe in Jesus
- That's his mission in life
  - Everything else is secondary ... including his health, his career, his reputation and his comfort
- So when Paul knows that all the guards in prison and people everywhere throughout the city are hearing about Jesus ... then he's full of joy
  - His circumstances aren't the thing that shapes his meaning and purpose ... it's living for Christ
- Because Paul understands he has one life ... one brief moment in history to make a difference for Jesus
- While he still has breath in his lungs ... Paul's mission in life to live for Jesus
  - And when he's doing that ... his life has meaning and purpose and joy and its not dependent on circumstances of his life
- **Application**
- Friends you and I have one life that God has blessed us with
  - If you're a Christian ... he has plucked you out of the fire of hell and guaranteed you eternal life through the death of his son on the cross
  - He is given you every spiritual blessing
  - He enables you to call him Father
  - He loves you more than you could ever imagine
- What are you going to do with that?
  - You and I were going down the wide road to destruction and through faith in Jesus ... he puts us on the narrow road to salvation
  - We were dead in our sins and transgressions ... but in Christ we are made alive
  - He's gives you all that
- What are you going to do with that?
- **Illustration – Stu & Ministry**
- Many of you know I used to work in finance for 11 years
- During that time people encouraged me to consider full time ministry
- It was a recurring conversation and each time I said "No"
  - How can I lead a church ... I've got too many issues [some of you would say I still do]
  - Mortgage
  - Four kids

- Too late, too old
- Church member, give generously ... but that horse has bolted
- Having this conversation with a guy called Matt
- I gave him all my excuses / reasons ...
- Then he said
  - "You know Stu, you can spend the next 40 years of your life using your God given gifts, time and abilities to help improve the share price for AMP and its shareholders
  - Or you can spend the next 40 years of your life using your gifts, time and abilities to help grow the KOG and see people saved for eternity"
- Ouch!
- Talk about uppercut!
- But that was a real rebuke and challenge for me ... and kicked off a process of me reevaluating everything and eventually going to Bible college, getting ordained and planting this church
  
- Not saying that to 'live for Christ' means going into full time ministry ... some you should ... but of course, it's not a prerequisite
- But what Matt's challenge to me did was bring home the truth of what Paul is saying here in v21
  - Basically he was saying
    - "Stu you have one life ... how are you going to live that life in order to maximise God's glory?"
  
- Friends ... it's true isn't it?
  - We have one life ... one brief moment in this world to make a difference for Jesus before we enter eternity
  - What are you going to do with the time that God has given you on this earth?
  - Are you going to make it you mission in life to live for Christ?
  - Or are you going to live for something else?
  - Are you going to do everything in the strength that God gives you to glorify Jesus for the next 20, 40, 60 years ... or are you going to prioritise other things?
  
- Some of you are young
  - You're at stage of life where you are making important decisions that will in many ways set the direction for the rest of your life
    - What course you study?
    - What job you apply for?

- Whether you will marry?
- Who you marry?
- How big a mortgage you take out?
- Whether to send your kids to private school?
- And the decisions you make affect the extent to which you can or will live for Christ
  
- Your career, your mortgage, your marriage, your parenting priorities can either enhance or limit your ability to live for Jesus
  - Will the career or job you get into allow you to serve Jesus and his church, or will it be so demanding that you won't have time to live for Christ
  - Is the house you want to buy going allow you the freedom to do ministry, or will it be so expensive that you won't be able to afford to give your time or money to gospel ministry
  - Will the person you marry enable and encourage you to live for Christ ... or hold you back?
  
- These are important decisions ... because they have life-long affects on your ability to live whole-heartedly for Christ
  - Be wise and prayerful and godly as you make those big decisions in your life
  - Because you have one life ... one brief moment in time to live for Christ
  - Don't waste it because you didn't think with an eternal perspective before making those decisions
  
- Some of you are older and approaching retirement
- You've been there, done that and got the battle scars to prove it
  - The question is not so much about making wise decisions that impact the rest of my life ... it's about working out how can you make the most of the remaining 10, 20, 30 years of your life to 'live for Christ'?
- For many of you at this stage of life ... God has blessed you with a house and superannuation and investments
  - What are you going to do with all that?
  - What are you going to do the remaining years of your life?
  
- **Illustration – GB**
- Guy that John and I know > Christian guy
- About 50yo > earnt good money ... doesn't need to work any more
- Instead of carrying on working, stacking more money in the super and having lush holidays

- Retired early to teach HS scripture
- Doing some part time study so he can be an effective Bible teacher
- Because
  - He's passionate about living for Jesus; and
  - He knows ... he's only got 20-30 years left to make a difference
- **Illustration – Col Bryant**
- Col had been a Christian for about five minutes ... retires ... becomes our treasurer, does three PTC courses, goes on mission to SL, and joined the mainly music team
- If you're in your 50-60's ... and you've got the resources ...
  - Why not retire early ... or go part time and devote a serious chunk of your life to gospel ministry while you've still got the energy and capacity to do it
  - You've got the time and the resources
  - I'd love to see an army of empty-nesters just powering on for the Lord
  - And there are a thousand possibilities
    - Discipling young people
    - Serving in ministries
    - Going to Bible college
    - Taking on leadership positions
- We have one life
  - How will you use it?
  - To live for Christ ... or something else?
- **4. One life of eternity**
- The other reason Paul has this purpose and meaning for life is because he knows that not only 'to live is Christ' ... but also that ... 'to die is gain'
- Paul understands he has one life ... one brief moment in history to make a difference for Jesus ...
- And if he dies doing it ... that's okay ...
  - Because to die and be with Christ is even better!
  - Not because he gets out of his hardship
  - But because then
    - he will be with Christ
    - he will be in heaven where there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain
    - Because then he will experience joy for eternity



- **Application**

- If you're like me I find this a bit confronting
- Because most people don't think like this
  - Most people think that life is good and death is bad
  - Therefore, you need to do everything you can to have
    - the longest
    - happiest
    - most fulfilled life you can get
  - If a person dies young ... or was unable fulfill their potential ... or didn't die naturally ... then we say that was a tragedy
- Of course, it is ... and I not minimizing or being flippant about death
  - But it reflects this mindset we have that - this life is all we have
  - Even Christians will think like this because they're not convinced that eternal life is better and that 'to die is gain'
  - And I think that's because we struggle to comprehend how good and how long eternal life really is
- And I get that
  - Having just come back from LSL and seeing the majestic snow-covered mountains of Canada ... it's easy to think that what we see and experience now is the ultimate
- But the Bible is clear, and Paul is clear ... we are just passing through this world to something better
  - Bible says we are aliens and strangers in this world<sup>1</sup>
  - We are only temporary residents here on earth
  - In fact, Paul says in Phil 3:20 our real citizenship is not of Rome or Australia or Canada or Sri Lanka ... our real citizenship is in heaven
- And so, if we believe the gospel ... that in Jesus we will not perish but have eternal life
  - Then we need to also believe that to 'die is gain' ... that eternal life IS infinitely better
- If you don't believe that to die is gain ... then you won't be able to say
  - "For me to live is Christ" because instead you will live for the things of this world ...
  - Because you still think this world and everything in it is better than being with Christ ... that eternal life is not really that good

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter 2:11

- But friends ... when you're able to see with the same perspective as Paul
  - That we're just passing through to a life of eternity where our real citizenship lies
  - Then you can hold a bit more loosely to life and things in this world
  - You can be less anxious about things that threaten to take away our security, comfort, power or popularity
- When you have the same eternal perspective as Paul you will be less concerned about
  - Pressure from friends to go their way
  - Feeling uncomfortable sharing the gospel
  - Being generous with your money
  - Not having all the creature comforts you desire
- And therefore ...
  - to give your life, your energy, your time, your money, your service, your hearts to Jesus
  - for his glory and his praise and his honour ... is a joy
- Because you know in your head and believe in your heart that 'to live is Christ and to die is gain'

## 5. Conclusion

- And friends no doubt some of you are thinking ...
  - "That's hard!
  - "Paul might be able to have that mission and that mindset ... but I'm not Paul!"
- Yes, that's true we're not Paul ... but in one sense ... we are just like Paul
- Because his mission in life was shaped by Jesus mission
- That mission of Jesus involved him coming to earth and going to the cross
- His whole reason for living ... was so that he would
  - pay the penalty for your sin and mine
  - reconcile us back to the Father
  - give us a life that is eternal and full and meaningful and wonderful
- By coming to earth and going to the cross Jesus is saying
  - "everything about my life ...
    - the reason I became human,
    - the reason I left my heavenly throne,

- the reason I died and rose again,
  - is to give you eternal life
- If you understand what Jesus has done for you
  - Then you'll see Jesus mission for life is ... "For me to live is you"
- Jesus Christ ... God the Son, Lord of heaven and earth says
  - "For me to live is you"
    - "My life is to see you sharing in eternal life"
    - "My life is to see you living with sure hope"
    - "Everything I do is subservient to that goal"
- When you look to the cross ... it shows you that Jesus is saying to you and I ... "For me to live is you"
- As the Holy Spirit convicts you and I of this truth ...
  - and we see what Jesus Christ has done for us ...
  - We can say
    - "Well Jesus ... if for you to live is me ... then for me to live is you"
- And if for you "to live is Christ and to die is gain" ...
  - then you have the best meaning and purpose in life ...
  - which means
    - you can face the challenges, hardships and tragedies of life and still find joy in Christ
    - you can serve him, honour him and even die for him ...
    - Because we have one life ... and the cross of Jesus calls us to live for him

## PRAY