

Title: PAUL'S GREAT PURPOSE IN LIFE

Text: Philippians 1:20-26

Intro: Paul wrote this epistle while in a Roman prison. Prior to this he had many trials and tribulations before reaching Rome (see Acts 27-28). Paul was a man of God who faced countless difficulties; and yet he was able to rejoice in the Lord amidst all his problems. His secret of joy in spite of trials lies in his great purpose in life which we shall see. Observe and learn from –

I. PAUL'S STRONG DESIRE (v.20)

A. To never be ashamed of anything for Christ and His Gospel's sake, even if it would mean jail for him! (**Rom. 1:16**).

B. To be always bold in any circumstances (**Prov. 28:1**).

C. To magnify his Lord at all times whether in life or death (**Gal. 2:20**). To "*magnify Christ*" means to cause people to recognize His greatness and superiority. Believers are to be like living magnifying glasses by making Christ truly wonderful and magnificent in the sight of everyone!

D. For Christ to be magnified, Christians must be clean and clear so that the light of Christ could shine through us (**Eph. 5:8; Phil. 2:15**). This was Paul's desire. May it be ours too!

II. PAUL'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY (v.21)

A. "*For to me to live is Christ...*" This is not what most people would say today. Worldly people live apart from Christ. For them life is all about money, pleasure, power, fame, and such things that only serve their selfish interests. A believer has a new central focus in life – Christ! (**Rom. 14:8; II Cor. 5:15**)

B. One of the most serious questions in life is the question about life itself. What is your life? What is its purpose on earth? For what or whom are you living it for? The Bible says that life on earth is short and uncertain (**Jas. 4:14; Prov. 27:1**).

C. Paul even dares to add, "...and to die is gain." Only a true follower of Christ can sincerely declare such testimony!

D. Sadly, when an unsaved person dies, he will absolutely lose not only his earthly life and possessions (**Psa. 49:10**); but will also experience terrible, eternal loss and damnation of his soul (**Mark 8:36-37; Rev. 20:15**). Too many deceived men exchange their priceless souls for things of much lesser value!

III. PAUL'S DIFFICULT CHOICE (vv.22-24)

A. Where he given the choice by God, Paul would not really know which situation to choose, whether life or death.

B. The amazing beauty of glory in Heaven with his Lord seems to be pulling him up. Most likely Paul was really talking about himself when he spoke of a certain man who was caught up in Paradise in **II Cor. 12:2-4** (cf. **Acts 14:19-20**).

C. To remain on earth and work more for His Lord and his brethren in Christ was still an excellent choice for Paul. Yet he also longed to be with Christ because he knew that would be *"far better."* Thus, Paul was being pulled into two directions – earthward and heavenward – both of which were favourable!

D. As for Paul, death is just a departure from earth and a homecoming to heaven to be with Christ (**II Tim. 4:6; II Cor. 5:8**). You see, only a Bible-believing Christian KNOWS where he is going after his death (**I John 5:13**). He is one strange fellow who can declare that dying is *"gain"* and *"far better"* than living on this earth. Death for the Christian is freedom from all hardship, trouble, grief, suffering, sickness and pain.

E. However, Paul's desire to live is ever present as there is still the work of the ministry to be done. He realized that his life will not end until his labours for His Lord were completed.

IV. PAUL'S STEADFAST CONFIDENCE (vv.25-26)

A. Paul was assured by the Lord that he would remain here on earth for a little more time. Consequently, he would then continue to be occupied not for himself but for others' sake.

B. He would make it his priority to help believers grow and advance in their spiritual life. For this reason, his efforts will result in believers having joy not only in him but also in Christ.

Conclusion: The Apostle Paul was a man of God who, like every common man, had many real problems. To make matters worse, he was imprisoned for his faith. Nevertheless, he still experienced joy in the Lord which he was able to pass on to other believers! Truly, he is our good example. His secret of joy comes from his great purpose in life – *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* Fellow Christian, can you truthfully say that this too is your great purpose in life?