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Paul's Life Verse; Philippians 1:18-26
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Introduction – A life verse is a verse of Scripture that captures your faith. It defines and guides and inspires you as a believer. My life verse is Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” As a young believer, I came across this verse and it stuck with me. It defined for me this new life in Christ, and so it became my life verse.

Now I truly don't know if this is Paul's life verse. I don't know if Paul would say, “Out of all my letters, this is my favorite verse.” But he does speak of life and of Christ, so for our purposes, we'll call it his life verse.

We're going to focus our attention this morning on the first part of that verse – For to me to live is Christ. We might could rephrase it this way – As far as I am concerned – real life, real living – is Christ – knowing Christ, following Christ, loving Christ. Paul has captured the teaching of Christ in these few words. Jesus described Himself as the way, the truth, and the life. He also said He was the resurrection and the life. Again, He declared I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly. Paul has truly summarized the Christian life here – For to me – to live – is Christ.

As believers in Christ, that short summary of our new life in Christ, powerfully resonates in our hearts. It captures perfectly our desire as new creations in Christ. This is exactly how we feel about our faith in Christ. We know He is everything. And yet, even though we would respond with an affirming amen in our hearts, we so often miss the mark when it comes down to the practical, day to day living. So the question for us this morning is how can we follow Paul's example here? How can we make his life verse, our testimony? How can we reorient our hearts so that these words are more than desire but actually become our witness? I believe the context around these words will give us four ways to make Paul's life verse, our life verse. How to approach life so that to us – to live – is Christ.

- I. Living with Reliance Upon Christ (vv18-19)
 - a. Paul says in v19 he knows that “this” will turn out for my deliverance. The “this” to which he refers is in v18. Paul rejoices that the gospel is being proclaimed by friend and foe – in that he rejoices – and he also rejoices in what he believes will be one result of continued gospel proclamation – yes, and I will rejoice.
 - i. The enemies of Paul thought as more people received the gospel, Rome would try to squash this treasonous cult by slaying its leader, Paul.
 - ii. However, Paul knows the gospel is unstoppable. If Rome were to make a martyr of Paul now, the gospel would flourish rather than flounder.
 - b. But Paul’s not speculating like I just did. Paul is utterly relying on Christ.
 - i. I know that through your prayers – nothing is more powerful than determined prayer, and nothing proves our utter reliance on Christ more than when we fervently pray for God to do what is impossible for us to do.
 - ii. Paul says, “and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Paul knows if he is released from house confinement, it won’t be because of the good nature of Rome or the surrender of his foes, it will be nothing less than the will of Christ.
 - iii. Paul says, “I know...this will turn out for my deliverance.” In Romans 8:28 Paul declares the theological truth – all things work together for good to those who love God. In Phil 1:19 Paul is holding fast to and believing in that theological truth. You see theology is more than gaining knowledge; it is the hope to which we cling for living.
 - c. As we learn to rely on Christ, we begin to learn to live in Christ.
- II. Living in Allegiance to Christ (vv20-21)
 - a. Read v20 – Paul says the greatest desire of his life, his eager expectation and hope, is that rather than being ashamed of living for Christ – he will honor Christ in his body, by how he lives and by how he dies.
 - i. In his life, he will honor Christ in his body by suffering well and not denying the Lord.

- ii. In his death, he will honor Christ in his body by persevering in Christ to his final breath and dying well. Suffering well – no matter what happens to this body, and dying well – leaving this shell for eternal glory.
 - b. Paul's determined expectation and hope is to magnify, honor Christ, in his body. He didn't say in his soul or in his heart, but in his body. Sometimes we live as though our faith is restricted to our souls with little to do with our bodies. But you see our faith encompasses our whole being, body and soul. We believe in our hearts, but we live out our faith in our bodies!
 - c. How do we honor Christ with our bodies? How do we live out our faith in our bodies? 1 Cor 6 says our bodies are temples. The Spirit of Christ dwells within us as believers. Do we treat our bodies like sanctuaries or do we treat them like landfills? Are we filled with the rottenness and decay of this world or are we filled with the life of Christ?
 - d. Are we filled with pornography or are we filled with prayer? Do we use our bodies to satisfy our lusts or do we keep our bodies pure as a home for Christ? Do our tongues talk others down or lift Jesus up? Cf Rom 6:12-13.
 - e. You see what we do with our bodies reveals where our allegiance lies. Does it lie with sin or self or with the Savior?
 - f. We have to discipline our bodies to honor Christ. It doesn't take discipline to sin. That comes natural. That's the easy path. But to honor the Lord, we have to fight, we have to train our minds, we have to resist our sinful inclinations and impulses whether it be gossip or slothfulness or gluttony or adultery – we have to fight the good fight of faith and believe that sin will destroy but Christ will bring life! You see there's death on the other side of giving in to sin – but there is joy on the other side of the fight of faith.
 - g. When we learn allegiance to Christ by honoring Him in our bodies, we learn that to live – to really live – is Christ.
- III. Living as Christ to Others (vv22-24)
- a. Paul says, "If I am to live in the flesh," that is, if I am to go on living, it's going to be for Christ – to live – is Christ. So that will mean fruitful

labor for Paul. It will be labor to live for Christ, but it will be worth it, it will be fruitful.

- b. Yet, being with Christ, is always far better – to die is gain. That’s a dilemma for Paul. It’s hard to choose between more fruit for God because I really want to honor Him for saving me, and being with Him in glory – that’s what I truly long for. How do you choose between serving Jesus more or being with Him?
- c. It comes down to this for Paul – he knew there was still work to be done for the church, more teaching, encouraging, discipling. They weren’t quite ready to stand on their own. So for Paul, the need of the church outweighed his longing of eternal joy. “Being with Christ is far better for me – but remaining with you is far better for you!”
- d. Living as Christ to others is how we learn that to live – is Christ.

IV. Living that Others May Glory in Christ (vv25-26)

- a. He needs to be with them a little longer so that they will progress in their faith and joy in their faith! Paul knew that growing in the Lord is just as essential as coming to the Lord. Paul knew that faith in Christ, when it’s growing, even through hardship and persecution, is always accompanied with unshakable joy. He has it – under arrest – and he wants to make sure they have it too.
- b. Paul knew if he didn’t make it back to these new, thriving believers, they might grow disillusioned in their faith. But after they have prayed and given, if he returns to them, they will see their faith alive and in action, their prayers answered, and will glory in Christ Jesus!
- c. For the Christian, that’s living – not accumulating the treasures of the world around me but seeing other believers happy in Jesus!

Conclusion – This is how we learn to live – is Christ. Relying on Christ. Allegiance to Christ. Living as Christ to others. And living that others may glory in Christ. That’s the abundant life Christ was talking about! That’s what it means to truly live! Are we merely existing or are we really living? – to live – is Christ!