**Philippians: To Live is Christ**

Purpose tonight: To set a tone for the semester for the members of our Alpha Omega club. Using Philippians 1!

Question to get us started: (not rhetorical) What is your plan for this semester?

What can you see God doing through you this semester?

What is your vision for this semester and year?

Theme of Philippians: Life in Christ.

Theme verse: Philippians 1:21 For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Background:

Philippi is the city Paul was called to in Macedonia/Europe from Asia Minor on his 2nd missionary journey. This church was very dear to his heart.

Acts 16:6-15

v. 6-8 Paul prevented from traveling west to Asia, Mysia in the north

and Bithynia along the Black Sea or Galatia to the East. Paul was blocked by the Holy Spirit in every direction.

What is God’s plan for me going into the future? Have some of your plans not worked out?

v. 12 Philippi was a Roman (not Greek) city.

v. 13 There was no synagogue there. A new kind of ministry for Paul.

The first church in what we now call Europe.

There was no synagogue for Paul to preach in, so he and Silas went down by the river, to a place of prayer. The church was, literally, born in a place of prayer. There he met Lydia, who was the first convert in Europe. v. 14 “God opened her heart.”

Paul fond memories.

Many fond memories, but his favorite was being jailed, along with Silas, for casting a demon out of a woman. Beaten, put in chains. Cold, Dark What did Paul and Silas do? They prayed and sang.

Q: What do you do in your darkest and coldest moments?

At midnight, Paul and Silas were miraculously freed. The jailer said, “What must I do to be saved.” Imagine Paul sharing that story while he was stuck in a jail in Rome.

Afterward, the city officials publicly apologized to Paul and Silas. God is great.

Q: Would you be willing to be publicly flogged and thrown into the darkest prison in order to help people to be saved?

**Philippians 1 To Live is Christ**

Phil 1:1 to all the Saints in Christ.

What is a saint (Gr. *hagios*)? He or she is a called-out, separate, different, holy person.

I appreciate that God calls us what he envisions as being, rather than what we are in our human selves. God sees us as what we can become and as what we will be in Christ.

Who are you and I? We are holy in Christ Jesus!!!!!

1:3-8 Assurance in Christ. What God **has already done** in us, what he **is now doing** in us, and **what he will continue to do** in us.

Q: How did Paul feel about the Philippian disciples?

Q: Do you, like Paul, truly have people on your heart? What is that like?

1:6 God began a good work in you. God began a good work in Philippi through Paul and Silas, specifically in the conversions of Lydia and the jailer.

God began a good work on the campuses in Merced.

1:5 …from the first day **past** until now **present**. He is still working in us…

1:6 God will carry his work in us on to completion. **future** Do you believe that?

1:6 God sees in us that which will be fully realized in heaven. He is working now toward that end.

In Christ the outcome is guaranteed. Trouble, victory, sadness, joy all has purpose and God will carry it to completion.

1:5 What are we partners in? In [sharing] the gospel. 1:7 In defending and confirming the gospel. “Those who possess the gospel share it.” That is what we have together.

1:7 Can you with Paul, say that you have the saints in Merced and around the world on your heart? Could you say in public (v.8) “God can testify” How much was he on their heart?

Paul 1:8 I yearn for you. (*epipotheo* which can be translated as homesickness) 1 Thess 2:6b-12 Paul felt similarly about the Thessalonians.

1:9-11 Q: What was Paul’s deepest desire for the Philippian believers?

--that they would have knowledge of and discernment about what is best.

Paul’s prayer is that our love for God will produce both knowledge of God’s will and discernment about how to best help to bring it about.

 Q: How can we come to know what is best? (Romans 12:1-2) Present your bodies as living sacrifices…. Then you will be able to test and approve God’s will.

v. 9 How is our love manifested? In knowledge and discernment (depth of insight).

We need to grow in our **knowledge** of what is right (largely from Bible knowledge)

We also need to grow in **discernment** (wisdom) about how to carry it out.

Discernment: The ability which makes us able to make a wise, moral decision.

To decide between **good, better and best.**

Q: Do you settle for what is good or even better, or do you earnestly seek what is best? In your schedule, in your work, in your boyfriend/girlfriend relationships…

Don’t forget, however, that with knowledge and discernment comes the need to do those things you discern need to be done.

v. 10 pure = sincere = without wax—a reference to delicate porcelain which often had small cracks repaired by filling them with wax.

v. 10 “blameless” refers to our motivation, not our actions.

Phil 1:12-26 Q: What is on Paul’s heart? (bear in mind where he is!)

The spread of the gospel. Paul is sharing his testimony.

1. v. 12-13 What has happened has served to advance the gospel. (his unjustly being accused by the Jews in Jerusalem, being imprisoned for two years and finally being sent to Rome, after many dangers to face trial)

2. v. 14-18 What is happening now is serving to spread the gospel. (being in chains in Rome, sharing his faith with many in Caesar’s household [Phil 4:22] to believe and thereby encouraging and emboldening disciples, even in Philippi).

3. v. 19-26 What will happen will also help to spread the gospel. (whether I am cleared of charges and remain to encourage the church or whether I am convicted and executed).

What it comes down to is that Paul believes Phil 1:6 applies to himself.

1:12-13 What has already happened is advancing the gospel.

Paul has shared his faith and many in Caesar’s household have come to believe (Phil 4:22)

1:14-18 What is now happening is advancing the gospel.

v. 14 Q: What will people be encouraged to do “because of your chains.” Sometimes we help people to do right more by our actions than by our “discipling.” Through your tireless effort, your pushing through sickness and suffering, your faithfulness despite loss and grief will advance the gospel.

v. 15-18 Paul refuses to let people with insincere motives rob his joy at the advancement of the gospel.

Paul did not dwell on what they did to him—so much so that we do not even know what these insincere self-serving believers actually did to Paul.

v. 18 “What does it matter?” Q: Could you say that?

1:19-26 What will happen will serve to advance the gospel.

Paul is certain of the outcome, but uncertain about the path by which he will reach that outcome. This is faith (Heb 11:1)!!!

v. 19 Paul: I KNOW that through your prayers and by the encouragement of the Holy Spirit that I will be delivered/saved.

v. 20 I EXPECT that I will have sufficient courage

Christ will be lifted up by my life/body, whether by my life or by my death. Q: Is this your attitude about your life?

1:21 For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. The theme verse in Philippians.

Q: Do you believe this? Really?

Paul had labored so hard, had sacrificed so much, could anticipate future hardship and suffering so great, that his heart longed for release from this life.

Do you feel this way?

Q: How would you fill in this blank?

For me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Phil 1:22-26 Q: How does Paul view his life? How did this affect his view of job, money, pleasure, etc….?

v. 22 For Paul, continued fruitful labor was sweetly anticipated,

v. 23 but dying in Christ and departing was even sweeter.

v. 23 I desire to depart. Depart is like pulling up stakes.

v. 24-26 But I believe that I will remain behind. Why?

v. 22 fruitful labor. v. 24 for your sake…. v. 25 for your progress…

notice: **Again, Paul is not sure about the path**

**v. 25 convinced that I will be delivered and remain.**

**Ending Questions:**

God will complete the work he began in you.

Q: What work do you see God doing in you this semester?

Q: For me to live is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_