The Apostle Paul is writing to his friends from prison. The great thing that unites them in fellowship is not just love for each other but a love for the gospel; they all long to see Christ preached to the ends of the earth. In this section Paul gives his friends a number of persuasive reasons for why, despite the adversity he is facing, they can be sure that God is in control and that Christ is indeed being preached more and more!

Q Why is it so hard sometimes to see God’s good purposes at work when we are going through trials?

Q How has what has happened to Paul advanced the Gospel?

In v13

In v14

In v15-18

Q How does what Paul says in v18 affect the way that we might look at people, churches and organisations that we might not fully agree with?

Q How does what Paul says in v19 connect with his bold statement in v6? (it is probably best to take the “deliverance” spoken of in v19 to mean “salvation” [as the NIV footnote indicates] – i.e. God’s salvation plan for Paul).

Q What makes Paul rejoice? (see v4 and v18) Does it make you rejoice? Why / why not?
Sermon Summary

It's important to understand that Paul is writing this letter whilst he awaits his trial – will he be vindicated and set free, or will he be convicted and executed?

These verses give us a very personal insight into what makes the Apostle Paul tick. He talks here about his purpose – what he wants to achieve in this life, and his philosophy – what underpins the way he thinks and lives. And in the light of these things he then spells out his dilemma; what do I want more… to live or to die?!

Personal Application

Q Read v20. What is Paul’s aim both in life and in death? What do you think this would look like if he was i) set free, ii) sentenced to death?

Q Read v21-26. What does Paul mean when he says, “For to me, to live is Christ”? How do the following verses shed light on that statement (also look at v9-11)

Q How would dying be “gain” for Paul?

Q If dying would be “gain”, why does Paul feel torn between the two options?

Q Why do you think death tends to frighten or worry us? How can Paul be so confident about facing death?

Q If Paul is an example for us to follow (3:17), what do we learn here about the priorities we should have in life?
Sermon Summary

Paul ends chapter one with a non-negotiable command about how the Philippians are to conduct themselves – “in a manner worthy of the Gospel”. They lived in a community of proud citizens who would identify themselves as loyal Romans, and who viewed this new sect of Christ followers with suspicion. The church in Philippi was facing opposition, persecution and suffering v28-30, and it’s particularly in this context that the way they live is crucially important.

Personal Application

Q What would you say are the main things that define a Christian? How do you think the world we live in would answer that question?

Q Read v27-28. How is “the Gospel” an important motivation for the way we live?

Q What is unity that we have in the Gospel and why is it so important?

Q How is our united stand in the faith of the gospel a sign of forthcoming destruction to those who oppose us?

Q How is it a sign to us of God’s salvation?

Q Read v29-30. What kind of suffering is Paul talking about here? What role does this kind of suffering play in the life of a believer? (cf. Matthew 5:10-12)

Why do you think we find it hard to endure persecution? How does this passage help?