

Philippians #4  
Philippians 1:21-28  
“Dreams and Dilemmas”

*Paul's letter to the Philippians is filled with joy despite the circumstances of his life. As Tom reminds us in this lesson, Paul was able to look past the circumstances, surroundings and people to see the big picture of God's agenda. And this God-centered vision helped him decide between two demanding choices.*

How do you respond when your dreams, ambitions and expectations don't turn out as you expected? What thoughts or feelings did you experience when life didn't go according to your plan?

It's normal to become angry, resentful, confused, bitter or victimized when our dreams fall apart. But not Paul. There are two sources of help mentioned in verse 19 that enable him to move beyond these human responses. What do you observe and how often do you turn to these for assistance?

For verse 21, Tom quoted James Montgomery Boyce saying, “it cuts like a surgeon's scalpel into the heart of Christianity” and John Stott who said, “the person and the work of Christ are the foundation rock upon which the Christian religion is built...take Christ from Christianity and you've disemboweled it.” In your own words, why is the creed of verse 21 so important?

Cut Paul and he bleeds Christ. After reading the following passages, record what hinders us from being guided by Paul's Christ-centered creed.

- Matthew 13:22
- 1 Timothy 6:9-10
- 1 John 2:15-17

Tom challenges us with this question: *“Have we lost the wonder of God amidst the wonder of His word? We've almost forgotten that God is a person and, as such, the relationship can be cultivated.”* How can we be guilty of this charge? What can be done to cultivate your relationship with Jesus? How does Galatians 2:20 help us develop this relationship?

There were three categories of dilemmas that Tom mentioned. Volitional (where two rationally good alternatives are available); Emotional (faced with contrasting feelings); and

Geographic (when we can't be in two places at one time). Can you recall facing similar dilemmas? What process do you go through to make your decision? What do you think helped Paul decide?

Paul was not so committed to this life that he feared death. Why does death strike fear in so many? In what specific ways is this fear of death addressed in these passages?

- 1 Corinthians 15: 50-58
- John 11:21-27

Tom develops the point that Paul faced two good choices – dying and being with Jesus or living and serving others. Verses 21-26 could be summarized “I will live for Christ’s glory as I serve others.” Name two things that would happen if you whole-heartedly adopted this conviction.

Like Tom’s illustration of getting goosebumps while the National Anthem is played before a baseball game, living as an ambassador of Christ should get us juiced up. Read the following passages and record your thoughts about seeing ourselves in this role.

- Ephesians 6:18b - 20
- 2 Corinthians 5:20-21

Tom’s closing thought was, “*As others see you, do they see Christ?*” This week, keep Christ before you in how you respond to what life deals and live for Him in such a way that you reflect Him in each of your choices.