

Read: Philippians 1:18b-27

God is Gracious to Us in Life or Death

Philippians 1:18b,21

Because of this I rejoice. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It's Saturday morning. Your family is trying to decide if they will spend the day at the park or playing your favorite games together. Both are great choices. You'd love to do either. That's what they call a win-win situation!

Paul was one of the greatest missionaries of all time. He spent all his time going from place to place starting churches and then encouraging people in those churches. He started churches in places named Corinth and Philippi. He would visit them, and when he couldn't be with them, he'd write letters to them.

God's Word for today comes from one of Paul's letters. He wrote it from a prison cell. You see, Paul was in jail for telling people about Jesus. He didn't know if he would go free or be put to death. How frightening!

However, when you read Paul's letter, you can hear in his words that he was not afraid. Just the opposite, Paul used words like *rejoice* and *joy*, *hope* and *courage*! Whether he lived or died, Paul saw this as a win-win situation. If he was set free, he was excited to continue his work of sharing the gospel with the people of Philippi and many others. He was especially eager to reflect his joy in Jesus so that others could see it. His courage came from knowing that Christ would always be with him and that Paul's work would bring Christ praise and glory.

But what if he was not set free? What if they put him to death? Paul still expressed joy. While he was eager to continue his work for Jesus, he knew that when he died, he would be with Jesus—the one he served and told others about. When he went to heaven, there would be no more pain or suffering, only the joy of being with Jesus forever!

The choice of living or dying was not up to Paul, and it's not up to us either. But, like Paul, we can live each day rejoicing because of what Jesus has done for us in forgiving our sins and preparing a place with him in heaven. Some days are hard. Some days are really hard. Even on the hard days, we can have hope and joy knowing that Jesus can bless all that we do. It's all for his glory!

Life is a win-win. We get to live each day knowing Jesus is with us, forgives us, and loves us dearly. Someday, when it is God's will, he will take us to be with him in heaven. For now, do

what Paul did and share this amazing message of God's grace with everyone around us. "I will continue to rejoice!"

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for Younger Children

- Describe the two things that Paul knew might happen to him. How did Paul feel about both possibilities?
- What promise did Jesus make to Paul that he has also made to you to help when you are facing a hard thing?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Paul was in prison and yet he said, "I will continue to rejoice!" How could he be so happy in that very difficult situation?
- Paul did not say that we will never have hard days. When you are having a bad day, how can Paul's words be a reminder to you and help calm any your fears?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Paul said, "For me to live is Christ." What does this mean for you? What might that look like in your life?
- Describe a difficult situation you faced recently or are now facing. How can knowing that Christ is with you in all things help you to face a challenge with courage and with joy?

Closing Prayer:

Dear Jesus, it can be hard to understand how you could take all the punishment for every sin I have ever made or will ever make. But I believe it! Help me to never forget how much you love and freely forgive me. Help me to share that love and forgiveness with others. In your name I pray. Amen.

Hymn: CW 391:1,6 – God Loved the World So that He Gave

God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe
Should ever lasting life receive.

Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To you, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!