

BALANCING LIFE AND DEATH

SCRIPTURE:

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake” (Philippians 1:21-24).

MATERIALS LIST:

(1) Level

SONG: “Live For Jesus”

LESSON:

MAIN MESSAGE:

As Christians, there is only one goal worth achieving: HEAVEN! However, the only way to achieve that goal is for Christ to return, or to die and leave this world. In the mean time, there is so much to do.

One of the toys I see less and less in parks these days is the teeter-totter. This is probably one of the simplest pieces of playground equipment. Just take a long board and lay it over a pipe, sit on one end and have one of your friends (only the ones you can trust) sit on the other end. I wasted hundreds of hours being heaved into the air, and then being violently dropped to the ground. But there was one game we played where both of us on the teeter-totter had to work together. We would pretend that the ground was molten lava and that we had to balance each other perfectly without touching the ground or else we would die. One day my best friend and I had perfected this balancing act and kept our feet off of the ground for what seemed like hours. Now, I had to be home before the sun went down, but there was no way that I was going to be the one to ruin this monumental achievement. Before long, my sister showed up, telling me how much trouble I was in for not being home on time. Girls just don't get how important stuff like this is, so she walked over and jumped on my side of the teeter-totter and killed us both!

This sounds like a silly game to play, but this is not that much different than the lives Christians live every single day. When you know you belong to God because you have obeyed the gospel of Jesus Christ and are living every single day to praise and glorify Him, you automatically have a desire to be in heaven with Him for all eternity. Any Christian who would rather be here on this earth, with all of its trials, temptations, pain and suffering, has probably been storing up their treasures here on earth instead of in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20). But at the same time, we know that as long as we are still alive, that means that God is not done using us to help Him grow His kingdom, the Church.

That can be quite a dilemma, which the apostle Paul completely understood when He wrote his letter to the Philippians in today's Scripture reading. He longed to be in heaven with Jesus, but he knew that God needed Him here on earth a little bit longer to continue spreading the Gospel. Paul was not afraid to die. That is what made him such a bold and dynamic preacher. His thoughts were, “If they take me out and stone me and I die, then I win because I get to be with Christ, but if they don't, then I win again because I get to continue to serve God longer.” Every morning you wake up and realize that you are still alive, there is only one thing that it means: God still needed you to be working in His service for at least one more day. What will you do TODAY to “Live for Jesus?”

PRAYER: We can't wait to be with You in heaven, but until then, use us however You need us.