INTRODUCTION
A. One of William Shakespeare's better-known plays is Hamlet. The play's best-known line is the beginning of "Hamlet's soliloquy": "To be, or not to be, - that is the question."
1. Hamlet is contemplating suicide.
2. He was trying to decide between life and death: to live ("to be") or to die ("not to be")
B. In Philippians 1:22-24 Paul is struggling with whether it is better to live or die
1. Philippians 1:22-24
2. The phrase "a strait betwixt two" carries the idea of being in a narrow place between two walls, unable to turn to either side and able only to go straight on
3. Today we might say he was "between a rock and a hard place"
4. The two walls which formed the dilemma were living and dying
C. Hamlet and Paul contemplated similar questions, but what a contrast existed between them!
1. Hamlet was considering death by his own hand, but Paul was leaving the outcome in God's hand.
2. Hamlet did not like either outcome - he was oppressed by life, but afraid of death; for Paul either alternative was good.
D. We learn many valuable lessons about life and death from Philippians 1:20-30. Let us now consider some of these lessons...

DISCUSSION
A. PAUL’S DILEMMA
1. Philippians 1:20
a. Paul was determined to exalt Christ, regardless of the outcome of his trial before Nero - whether he was released (and thus lived) or whether the court sentenced him to be executed.
b. The words "whether by life, or by death" prompted what has been called "Paul soliloquy" about life and death
c. Philippians 1:21-24
d. Notice Paul's list of advantages for life and then death
2. Advantages For Life
a. "For to me to live is Christ” (v.21)
   1) Christ is the reason for living
   2) The phrase "to me" is translated from one Greek word and is at the beginning of the sentence to give emphasis
   3) Paul is saying, “Regardless of what life is to others, “to me,” it is Christ
   4) Jesus was the beginning of Paul’s life, the challenge of his life, the motivation of his life, the strength of his life, and the goal of his life
   5) What about us?
      a) Complete this sentence: “For me to live is ________.
      b) Many would insert money, possessions, fame, power
c) What is the most vital things in the world to you? It is Christ - or, is it something else?

6) As Paul considered the possibility that he might survive his coming trial, he concluded that that would be alright - because he would still be close to Christ
   b. “This shall bring fruit from my work” (v. 22)
      1) Life gives time for worthwhile work
      2) In life there is the opportunity to evangelize and teach - gathering fruit for the Lord
      3) As will discussed in a moment, Paul was suffering greatly in his work, but still believed bearing fruit for the Lord was worth living for
   c. “Needful for your sake” (v. 24)
      1) Life gives additional opportunities to help others
      2) Philippians 1:24
      3) Paul knew that being with Christ would be the best for him, but he knew living and helping others was more necessary

3. Advantages For Death
   a. On the other hand, Paul might not be acquitted and could lose his life - but Paul was not worried for he says “to die is gain” - He would find relief in death
      1) Paul had to be a tired man
      2) Paul suffered much - 2 Corinthians 11:23-28
      3) If the blessings of Revelation 14:13 applied to anyone, it would apply to Paul
      4) But notice again Philippians 1:21
         a) “To die is gain” only if “to live is Christ”
         b) The promise of Revelation 14:13 is only for those “who die in the Lord”
   b. “Depart and be with Christ” (v. 23)
      1) Paul’s great desire was to be with Christ
      2) Notice that Paul just did not say this was better, he said it “very far better”
      3) Notice the word “depart” - Paul viewed his going to be with Jesus as a departure.
      4) For the Christian, this life is a journey, and the destination is to be with Christ - and death is an essential part of reaching this destination

B. PAUL’S DECISION
   1. Notice Paul’s abrupt change from his previous uncertainty - Philippians 1:25-26
      a. Paul had a need sense of responsibility - He was unselfish
      b. He could say no to self in order to say yes to others
   2. Paul was convinced that would survive this ordeal, and that he would remain side by side with them
      a. He knew that this would contribute to their “progress and joy in the faith”
      b. Progressing in the faith is necessary to having joy in the faith
      c. The end result would be that their “glorying” or confidence would “abound in Christ Jesus” through Paul’s “presence” with them again
   3. From this we learn that; Our decisions should not be made just on the basis of what is best for us, but also in regard to what is best for others

C. PAUL’S DEDUCTION
   1. Paul wants them to know how what he as just written in the previous verses should impact their lives.
a. He wants them to make personal and practical application
b. Theology is never just theory, thus...

2. It should motivate them to live a faithful Christian life
   a. Philippians 1:27
   b. Paul wants to be assured that whether he is able to come to be with them, or is absent because of death, that they will live their lives compatible with the Gospel

3. It should motivate them to live a courageous Christian life
   a. Philippians 1:28-30
   b. They were undergoing persecution like Paul
   c. Paul was not afraid, so he does not want them to be afraid

CONCLUSION
A. “To be, or not to be?” Life or death?
   1. You may not ask Hamlet’s question, and you may not ponder the alternatives as Paul did.
   2. Frankly, most of us do not like to think about death.
   3. In fact, some go to great lengths to avoid the subject

B. Nevertheless, death is a reality.
   1. Hebrews 9:27
   2. The question is not whether we will die, but whether we will be ready when we die
   3. Remember: no person is ready to die until he is ready to live - ready to live for Christ (“For me to live is Christ”)