

Philippians 1:12-25  
 Funeral Message  
 IM1114

Oct. 14, 2011  
 Kortney Gordon Funeral

## “TO LIVE IS CHRIST”

**INTRODUCTION:** We’ve gathered here today to find comfort and courage in Jesus Christ in the hour of death...

1. The death of two people **Kortney Blythe Gordon** and her pre-born daughter, **Sophy Joy Gordon**.
  - a. Two lives inextricably linked in life,
  - b. Two lives providentially joined in death,
  - c. Two lives graciously spent side by side in eternity.
2. **Kortney’s life verse** was Philippians 1:21
  - a. *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* (Phil. 1:21)
  - b. This verse was even tattooed to the top of Kortney’s feet! (This whole passage would have been tattooed had Kortney’s feet been big enough!)
  - c. A life ambition Kortney would remember every time she looked down to her bare feet, flip flops or sandals.
3. Paul wrote these words for three reasons:
  - a. To give glory to Jesus Christ
  - b. To give encouragement to his fellow Christians
  - c. To explain the course of his own life
4. And it is with reference to **Kortney Gordon**, her God and her life that we turn to these verses again –
  - a. Glory to God
  - b. Comfort for us
  - c. Reason for living
5. Three paragraphs, three truths, three purposes...

### I. ENCOURAGEMENT FOR US (Phil. 1:12-14)

*I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* (Phil 1:12-14)

1. Paul tells his Philippian friends that his *circumstances* had actually worked out for the better, contrary to human appearance, because people were coming to faith in Christ.
  - a. He’d been arrested 4 or 5 years earlier for preaching the Gospel
  - b. He’d spend 2 years under house arrest in Rome

- c. During that time, he'd write four New Testament epistles (letters): *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians*.
  - d. The last letter was a letter to his favorite church
 

*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:3-6)*
2. Paul says, "It has really been a good thing that I have been imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel, here in Rome, because three benefits have come from this house arrest."
    - a. *I am able to write you this letter.*
    - b. *The Saints in Rome have been emboldened in their witness.*
    - c. *The guards chained to me daily have heard the Gospel and even carried that message into the Imperial Palace where other soldiers have heard the good news about Jesus Christ.*
  3. **In other words:** Paul's difficult circumstances, and the great injustices he'd suffered for 4 years, have led to the *Encouragement* of many believers: Philippians, Romans and New Imperial Guard converts!
  4. **Kortney** had a lot in common with the apostle Paul: bold faith, fearless witness, a winsome way with people, and "*divine appointments*" enabling her to speak for life and for Christ in amazing places.
    - a. *Field Director for Students for Life*
    - b. A prophetic voice of moral courage and for moral sanctity...
 

*[Abortion-advocating professors and staff] too often...use their position of influence to promote an anti-life, anything-goes agenda. "...universities tend to be a breeding ground for morally relativist, "don't judge me and my choices" and "I'm okay, you're okay" philosophies. Thus, the popular, trendy causes attract more students than the more controversial ones. It's difficult for pro-life, pro-self-control, pro-chastity individuals to compete with professors who not only have unrestricted amounts of time to mold their students' minds, but also have the support of a plethora of campus clubs touting hip causes that require little sacrifice and don't challenge one's lifestyle." Kortney Blythe Gordon, HLA Action News, Fall 2010.*
    - c. She'd been arrested *9 times* for public protest and preaching against abortion.
    - d. Like Paul, she'd been acquitted every time and released as a citizen in good standing.
  5. **Yesterday:** "*Voices from the Womb*" was played for the members of Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.
    - a. A video witness with ultrasounds of pre-born babies in the womb
    - b. "*Sofy's Voice*" was seen and "heard" in our Capitol.
    - c. **Like Mother, like Daughter**
    - d. "*Jesus Christ is my Lord, abolishing abortion is my calling.*"
  6. Like the saints who've gone before her, Abel, Paul, William Wilberforce, **Kortney Blyth Gordon** speaks even now:

- a. *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible. By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks. (Heb. 11:1-4)*
  - b. Paul was eventually killed in a Roman Prison but he left 13 epistles that still “speak” the Gospel.  
*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. (2 Peter 3:15-16)*
  - c. The ProLife movement goes on today with *Sophy’s voice* and Kortney’s witness living still.
  - d. **You cannot silence the voice of the dead.**
  - e. In fact: *Most people speak louder and more clearly in death than they ever did in life.*
7. And this is for our **encouragement**: That we too might give our lives to some great cause of Christ in the world:
- a. *Something larger than life, greater than self, and lasting forever...the Kingdom of God.*
  - b. To “*advance the Gospel*”
  - c. To *embolden* others to live and speak for Christ
  - d. To *make known* the message of Christ to others  
*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. (John 10:10)*  
*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)*

## II. TO BRING GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST (Phil. 1:15-18)

*Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. (Philippians 1:15-18)*

1. There were many people who wanted to see Paul fail, to see his message discredited, and his voice silenced.
  - a. Roman officials who wanted no civil unrest
  - b. Jewish leaders who considered Paul a heretic
  - c. Judaizing Christians who feared his message of grace
  - d. Even other preachers jealous of his success and influence

2. They *reveled* in the fact of Paul's imprisonment and preached Christ in another way to diminish Paul's influence.
3. Paul's response to all this? *Great! Whenever Jesus is preached, for whatever reason, then Paul was happy!*
  - a. *But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice... (Phil 1:18)*
  - b. Debates about Christ? A forum for the Spirit.
  - c. Roman investigations into Christianity? Exposure to Gospel Truth.
  - d. Jewish comparisons of Old Testament law to New Testament Gospel? Both witnessed to Christ.
  - e. Men preaching out of jealousy? All the more converts!
4. The **ProLife Movement** is a highly-charged, volatile, and politicized environment. Kortney rejoiced to see...
  - a. Sidewalk counseling, protests, prayer vigils, arraignments before judges, debates at Universities, student forums, campus organizations, yes...
  - b. ...and even her own death so that...
  - c. *"Christ is proclaimed"*
5. **Permit me to say this:** *This funeral is **not** about Kortney, little Sophy, Ben and the family, the ProLife Movement, or the Gospel! This funeral is all about Jesus Christ.*
  - a. Look at your bulletins: *"A Worship Service: In Celebration of Our Risen Lord in the lives of Kortney Blyth Gordon and Sophy Joy Gordon.*
  - b. **The people are merely the instruments of the Savior**
  - c. The **honor of Christ** is the great end of all.
 

*But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice... (Phil. 1:18)*

*I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (Phil. 1:20)*

*...so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. (Phil. 1:26)*

    - a. *Christ proclaimed... Christ honored... glory in Jesus Christ!*
6. When Kortney was alive and visited Christ Covenant Church, it was my sacred duty to speak **to** her about Jesus Christ. She was a sinful person in need of Jesus, just like everyone else.
7. Now that Kortney has died and gone to heaven, it is my sacred duty to speak **for** her about Jesus Christ. She is a glorified saint in the presence of Jesus Christ for eternity.

8. **I know this for a fact:** *If I had 15 seconds with Kortney Gordon or little Sophy – just 15 seconds – they would both say to me, “Tell our loved ones about the glory of Christ. Forget about eulogizing me and evangelize them!”*
9. The **Scripture** tells us that this is the concern of those who die and pass on before us:
  - a. The Rich Man and Lazarus
  - b. *And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.'* (Luke 16:27-28)
10. The **third reason** we are here today...

### III. THE PREACHING OF JESUS CHRIST TO ALL (Phil. 1:18b-25)

*The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith...* (Phil. 1:18b-25)

1. Paul says something very odd to us: *Given the choice, he would prefer to die and go to heaven than continue on earth in ministry. But...he would do whatever Christ wanted him to do for both the glory of Christ and the good of the Church.*
2. **Why does he think and live this way?** *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*
  - a. Meaning...
  - b. In this life, I *live to love and serve Jesus.*
  - c. When I die, I *gain the blissful reward of being with Jesus.*
  - d. The latter is better than the former.
3. **Only a born-again, converted and Spirit-indwelt Christian can say that, mean that, live that and embrace that in death.**
4. Here, my friends, is **THE** essential difference between a true Christian and a non-Christian (a fake).
  - a. The Christian says: *I live for Christ and my death is the greatest joy of all.*
  - b. The Unbeliever says: *I live for self and my death is the greatest tragedy of all!*
5. **I would remind you of three realities in life...**
  - a. **First:** Kortney would not choose to come back to us even if she could. She is with Jesus now, and as Paul says “*that is far better*” than being with us.

- b. **Second:** Kortney would come back to us if Jesus asked her to do so, because she loves Christ and she loves us...

*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. (Phil. 1:21-24)*

- c. **Third:** Kortney's greatest concern is for *your salvation*, so that you will see her again...soon...in heaven!

6. **J. Alec Motyer:** *The Message of Philippians: BST; pp. 86-89.*

*What does Paul mean when he says that for him to live is Christ, and to die is gain? We could paraphrase and extend his thought by saying, 'Life means Christ to me, as I more fully know and love and serve him day by day; death means Christ to me, when I shall finally possess and eternally enjoy him.' To die is gloriously to possess Christ; to live is gloriously to bear fruit. Faced with this double possibility, Paul attempts to assess what is involved in each course, and confesses that his desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is (very) far better. When a Christian dies all the uncertainties and dangers lie behind. All the certainties and safeties lie ahead in the presence of Christ. The Christian goes to be with Christ. Suppose we had been with Paul in Rome just then, and had seen him as he was, a man of immense vigour of mind and body, with gigantic gifts, a man irreplaceable in the church. How keenly we should have felt the loss were he to be executed! What an untimely death! – and all the other things we hear said when a notable Christian dies unexpectedly. But what is the reality for the person concerned, for Paul? He is not the loser; His is not 'poor Paul'. For him it is better by far than anything else that could have happened or could be imagined. Indeed, even while the church mourned his loss, he would possess unimaginable riches. For him, as for us at our death too, it is far better.*

7. **Please...**do not say, "Poor Kortney, she had so much life and love ahead of her." And, please, do not say, "Poor little Sophy, she never got to be with us."

- a. **Not so!**
- b. Kortney now enjoys what she lived for: *Jesus Christ*
- c. Sophy has "lost" nothing, but sin, sorrow, suffering. She has never known life in a fallen world. The first thing her little eyes saw was the smiling face of *Jesus Christ*.
- d. *Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. (Luke 23:28)*

8. **Here is the great tragedy:** That you will go through all your long (or short) life living for self and fearing your death because you do not know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then you will die...lose life...lose Christ...and *that is very much the worst of all!*

9. **Key point today:** Three weeks or so ago, *Kortney* said to her sister *Ashley* that she was very burdened for some of her loved ones who were not saved. She said to *Ashley*, "If my untimely death would bring them to faith in Christ. I would gladly die tomorrow."

10. *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the*

*body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. (Phil. 1:21-26)*

11. ...”so that in Kortney and in little Sophy you may have *ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus...*”
- a. Her life of love...
  - b. Her life of witness...
  - c. Her life of moral courage...
  - d. Her life of saving lives...
  - e. **And today it is your life she asks Jesus to save!**

**CONCLUSION:** As a minister of Jesus Christ and a spokesman for Kortney and Sophy, I ask you...

1. Are you ready to *live for Christ and to die in gain?*
2. Are you ready to *repent of sin, place your trust in Christ alone, surrender to His Lordship over your life?*
3. Are you ready to start living for something *larger than life, greater than self and lasting forever?* Christ and His Kingdom?
4. While you are alive *today*, are you willing to prepare for your *inevitable death?*
5. Are you willing, today, to change the course of the *rest of your life* so that it really counts...as did Kortney’s brief life?
6. Are you ready to **grant** to Kortney and Sophy their **“last request”**?  
*She is waiting in heaven to be reunited with her beloved husband, Benjamin Gordon; parents, Kristin Blythe and Larry Blythe and his wife Jane; mother and father-in-law, Natalie and John Gordon; sister, Ashley Owen and her son, Elijah; brother, Jeff Blythe and brother-in-law, Nathaniel Gordon; maternal grandmother, Shirley “Shashee” Hamilton; paternal grandmother, Sharla Blythe; uncle, Don Blythe and his wife Brenda; aunt, Renee O’Brien and her husband Chet; loving cousins: Dawnelle, Jesse, Mike, Nick, Jaron and friends.*
7. Kortney was *never* tentative about anything!
8. Now is the time for you to be definite about Jesus Christ and eternal life.
9. **Let us pray...**