

## To Live is Christ

**Text:** Philippians 1:19-26

### Introduction:

1. Paul has just encouraged the Philippians that his imprisonment was being used of God to advance the cause of the Gospel (Vs. 12-18). He now goes on to elaborate further on his trial in Rome and how he believed God would be glorified through it.
2. Central to Paul's outlook is his statement in Verse 21 – "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." This is the heart beat of this section and the key to understanding why Paul had the perspective He had on his situation.
3. We will consider Paul's life in Christ under three headings:

*Consider firstly Paul's...*

### I. **ANTICIPATION OF LIFE IN CHRIST (VS. 19-20)**

We have the words "I know" (Vs. 19), "earnest expectation" and 'hope' (Vs. 20) that all reveal Paul's anticipation of faith for a favorable outcome to his trial before the Roman court. Paul anticipates:

#### **A. Blessings through Prayer (Vs. 19)**

Paul expected 2 outcomes from the prayers of the saints:

1. The Preservation of His Natural Life (Vs. 19a)
  - a. 'this' = probably means 'this whole affair' or "my present circumstances". (Fee)
  - b. 'salvation' = usually refers to salvation in a spiritual sense (i.e., salvation from sin) but in this context it is salvation in the physical sense of having his life preserved.
  - c. "through your prayer" = Paul has already assured them of his prayers for them (Vs. 3-11) and now he expresses his confidence that their prayers for him will be effectual.
2. The Power for His Spiritual Life (Vs. 19b)
  - a. 'supply' = means to furnish or provide for. "The grammar assumes the closest kind of relationship between their prayer and the supply of the Spirit" (Fee). Our English word 'chorus' comes from this word.
  - b. Regarding the historical background to the word Wiersbe writes, "Whenever a Greek city was going to put on a special festival, somebody had to pay for the singers and dancers. The donation called for had to be a lavish one, and so this word came to mean 'to provide generously and lavishly.' Paul was not depending on his own resources but on the generous resources of God, ministered by the Holy Spirit."
  - c. "of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" = the Spirit of the Son. The Son of God indwells Paul by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9-10). What a marvelous truth, "Christ in you the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).
  - d. Note: The supply spoken of here is not so much the Person of the Spirit as it is the power and operations of the Spirit. We receive the Person of the Spirit at the moment of salvation but

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we do not automatically receive all of His workings. The gracious workings of the Spirit of God are secured through prayer.

- e. Luke 11:13 “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

### B. Boldness through Persecutions (Vs. 20)

Note that verse 20 flows right on from verse 19. The supply of the Spirit is key to Christ being glorified in Paul's life at this time. Boldness is something that comes from the filling of the Spirit of God (Acts 4:31). Paul would need great boldness to face the deranged Nero as judge.

1. The Faith behind his Boldness (Vs. 20a)
  - a. “earnest expectation” = means an intense expectation. The word is a compound word made up of ‘away’, ‘head’ and “to watch” and indicates watching something with the head turned away from other objects. It indicates the concentrated intense hope which ignores other interests and strains forward as with outstretched head.” In ancient times the word was used of a spectator who sat on the edge of his seat and stretched out his neck to see the outcome of an athletic event. (Gromacki) The word was used in the Greek classics of a watchman who peered into the darkness, eagerly looking for the first gleam of a distant beacon. (Wuest)
  - b. ‘hope’ = a confidence expectation, a settled assurance of heart. Gromacki writes, “Hope is not a crossing of the fingers, a naïve wishful thinking against great odds; rather, it is a divinely implanted response to the sure promises of God.”
  - c. “Paul combines ‘expectation’ and ‘hope’ to emphasize his certainty that the future is essentially guaranteed.” (Hansen) “Expectation is the outward manifestation of hope, whereas hope is the inner conviction of the heart.” (Gromacki)
2. The Features of his Boldness (Vs. 20b)
  - a. What Boldness Excludes – “that in nothing I shall be ashamed”. Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel! (Rom. 1:16).
  - b. What Boldness Exudes – “but that with all boldness”. The word means confidence in speaking, freedom of speech, plainness of speech, outspokenness.
3. The Fruit of his Boldness (Vs. 20c)
  - a. The Sphere of Christ's Exaltation – “in my body”
    - i. “as always, so now” = Paul magnified Christ consistently.
    - ii. ‘magnified’ = means to make great, to make conspicuous, to enlarge, to extol and glorify. Paul would not make Christ great in the sense of him contributing to Christ's greatness as Christ is above all and possesses greatness in its totality. Rather, it has to do with Paul magnifying Christ to men by his bold stand for the Gospel.
    - iii. Illustration: A magnifying glass that enlarges an object to the viewer. Paul's life would be a magnifying glass in the hand of God to draw attention to Christ.

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- iv. Illustration: “The stars are much bigger than the telescope and yet the telescope magnifies them and brings them closer. The believer’s body is to be a telescope that brings Jesus Christ close to people. To the average person, Christ is a misty figure in history who lived centuries ago. But as the unsaved watch the believer go through a crisis, they can see Jesus magnified and brought so much closer.” (Wiersbe)
- b. The Scenarios for Christ’s Exaltation – “by life or by death”
  - i. “by life” = if God spared Paul’s life, His aim would be that Christ would be magnified in whatever time God left him on this earth to do his will.
  - ii. “by death” = Paul knew that execution was a possible outcome of his trial before Caesar. Paul was trusting that God would supply boldness by the Spirit to magnify Christ if that situation should eventuate. To Paul, death was just as much a means to glorify Christ as was life.

*Observe secondly Paul’s...*

## II. ASPIRATION FOR LIFE IN CHRIST (VS. 21-24)

### A. Paul’s Determination about Living (Vs. 21)

- 1. His Passion for Life (Vs. 21a)
  - a. Christ was Paul’s One, consuming passion. Paul knew no divided life. He had one goal and passion, to know Christ, to become more like Christ and to live each moment for Christ and Christ’s glory. “Paul’s thoughts, feelings, and actions were fixed on Christ and controlled by Him. The Saviour was both the center and the circumference of his daily existence.” (Gromacki) “The foundation, center, purpose, direction, power and meaning of Paul’s life is Christ.” (Hansen)
  - b. Paul’s singular mind is further expressed in chapter 3:8-14 “Yea, doubles, and I count all things but loss...”
  - c. Christ is our life (adapted from F.B. Meyer):
    - i. The origin of our life – before salvation we were spiritually dead but when Christ saved us, our spiritual life began!
    - ii. The essence of our life – Christ is the center and circumference of our Christian lives.
    - iii. The model of our life – we all consciously or unconsciously imitate someone. We are to imitate Christ.
    - iv. The aim of our life – our one consuming passion is to know Christ more and to please Him in everything.
    - v. The solace of our life – Christ comforts and sustains us in our Christian journey.
    - vi. The reward of our life – what rewards await those who live for Christ, the greatest reward being Christ Himself.
  - d. Someone wisely observed that “**life is what we are alive to.**” The thing that excites us is the thing that really is “life” to us.
  - e. Challenge: Fill in the blank for your life – “For me to live is \_\_\_\_\_?” What’s your passion in life in practice (never mind

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what we state in theory!)? We are all passionate about something or someone! Is it “for me to live is...” sport, cars, my career, pleasure, money, possessions, my house, my hobbies, entertainment, social media etc.?

- f. Someone said that pleasures are like the snow – a moment white, then melts forever.
  - g. Illustration: Christ waiting for you at the finish line of the Christian race.
2. His Perspective on Death (Vs. 21b)
- a. ‘gain’ = means advantage, profit. Death for Paul would mean he would gain not only the presence of Christ (Vs. 23) but his death would also be a witness for Christ (Vs. 20b). Death for the Christian is not a loss but a gain. We lose our sinful bodies to gain a sinless one. We lose our trials for eternal peace. We exchange this sinful, corrupt world as a home for the glories of God’s perfect heaven.
  - b. Note: This was not a death wish on the part of the Apostle Paul nor was he actively seeking death. Paul was totally surrendered to the will of God whether that be life or death and he had the correct view of death for the Christian.
  - c. 2 Cor. 5:6-9 “Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are **absent from the Lord**: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, / say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be **present with the Lord.**”
    - a. Challenge: Do you a Christian view of death?
    - b. Illustration: John Phillips writes in his commentary of how he once saw the logo of a missionary organization that had the picture of an ox with a plow on one side and an altar on the other. Underneath the picture there was the caption, “Ready for either.”

### B. Paul’s Deliberations about Living (Vs. 22-23)

Paul was caught between the two possibilities that were before him.

- 1. A Continuation of Life on Earth (Vs. 22)
  - a. “live in the flesh” = the word flesh is used in the sense of physical life rather than a reference to the sinful flesh nature.
  - b. “the fruit of my labour” = Paul anticipated further fruitfulness in the work of God should it be the Lord’s will for him to continue on earth for another season.
- 2. A Commencement of Life in Heaven (Vs. 23)
  - a. “a strait betwixt two” = refers “to pressure being imposed upon someone from two different directions.” (Gromacki) It means “I am hemmed in on both sides by the two. There was an equal pressure being exerted from both sides, from the desire for continued life and from the desire for death.” (Wuest) “The two constraints that pushed at Paul were the necessity to abide and the desire to depart. Both compulsions were valid and equally strong.” (Gromacki) The same Greek word is used to describe the ‘throng’ in Luke 8:45 and the siege of Jerusalem when her enemies would “keep thee in” on every side (Lk. 19:43).

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- b. 'desire' = refers to a very strong desire. It is translated 'lust' 32 times in the N.T. It is very often used to describe the sinful passions of the flesh but can also be used in a positive sense as it is here to describe a godly longing. The verb 'having' (pres/act/part) reveals that this was a constant desire in the heart of the Apostle. Paul's passionate desire and longing was to be with Christ!
- c. 'depart' = a Christian description of death. For the believer, death is simply the doorway into the presence of God. The word was used in the ancient world to describe:
  - i. The soldier taking down his tent and moving on. In death, the believer's earthly life is packed up and he relocates to heaven!
  - ii. The sailor loosening the ship and setting sail. When the believer dies, he is loosed from this world and enters glory.
  - iii. The farmer unyoking the oxen. When we die we are unyoked from the burdens of life and ministry. Thank God Christ's yoke is easy and His burden light in this life. The problem is not the yoke Christ lays upon us but the fact we carry it in a body that still suffers the effects of sin and the curse.
- d. "to be with Christ" = for the believer, to be absent from the body means to be present with the Lord. This is "far better" in every way to life on earth.
- e. Note: This verse rules out the error of soul sleep. It is clear that the upon death, the Christian will immediately and consciously be in the presence of Christ.

### C. Paul's Decision about Living (Vs. 24)

- 1. "abide in the flesh" = the same meaning as "live in the flesh" (Vs. 22).
- 2. "more needful for you" = Paul was willing to forgo the glories of heaven for a bit longer in order to be of service to the saints. "Paul was willing to delay crossing the finish line in his own race in order to serve the needs of the believers in Philippi. He set aside his personal ambition so that he could do what was necessary for them." (Hansen)
- 3. Note: So long as God leaves you on this earth, remember it is primarily for the service of others!

*Note thirdly Paul's...*

## III. ASSURANCE OF LIFE IN CHRIST (VS. 25-26)

### A. The Reality of Paul Remaining (Vs. 25a)

Paul employs two words to express his confidence that his life will be spared:

- 1. 'confidence' = means persuaded. "It speaks of a settled conviction which is the result of a past completed process of turning a matter over in one's mind until one is persuaded of it." (Wuest)

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2. 'know' = refers to an intuitive knowledge. The Spirit of God had given Paul a settled persuasion of heart that his time on earth was not over yet, that there was more work God had for him to accomplish first. His knowledge manifested itself in two predictions:
  - a. "I shall abide" = he knew he would remain alive.
  - b. "continue with you" = he knew he would return to Philippi.

### **B. The Reason for Paul Remaining (Vs. 25b-26)**

God's purpose for Paul remaining on earth is outlined. It was for:

1. The Furtherance of their Faith (Vs. 25b)
  - a. The word 'furtherance' is the same word as Verse 12.
  - b. Paul was concerned not only about the advancement of the Gospel but also the advancement of the saints. Paul wanted them to advance into some new areas of spiritual growth. He was willing to postpone going to heaven in order to help Christians grow!
2. The Joy of their Faith (Vs. 25b-26)
  - a. God wants us to know a joy-filled faith – "joy of faith". For some, their faith is merely one of the intellect with little warmth of heart. Philippians teaches us that God wants us to have joy! Note that progress/growth in the faith results in genuine joy of faith.
  - b. Paul knew that his release and return visit to the Philippians would increase their joy. Their joy on the human level would be in Paul's presence ("for me") but on the spiritual level, their joy would be "in Christ" for what He had done. Christ would get the ultimate glory for all that was accomplished.
  - c. "Paul is the human instrument through whom God works to bring these joys to the Philippians by means of his personal presence with them again." (Wuest)

### **Conclusion:**

1. Do you have a biblical view of life and death as a Christian?
2. What are you living for in your life? What is your passion? Is there something that has robbed Christ of His rightful place in your heart and life?
3. Are you an others focused Christian? Are you passionate not just about the salvation of the lost (furtherance of the Gospel) but also the growth of the saints (furtherance of the believers)?