

# *Philippians 1:19-26*

*Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 5/20/2007*

## **Remaining joyful in suffering: To live is Christ**

### **Sermon**

Well, when you get up every morning, when you go to sleep every night, what is the first thing you think of, and what is the last thing you think of? When you get up in the morning, what is the first thing you think of? Do you get up and think “well, I’ve got to go do this, got to go do that, I’ve got to make breakfast”, whatever it might be. When you go to bed, what are you thinking about? What does your mind dwell on throughout the day? We’re going to see today that for the apostle Paul to live is Christ. Literally to live Christ, to die gain. And we’re going to see because the apostle Paul had a truly right Christian, Christ-focused mindset that he could rejoice in the midst of sufferings. And I believe from this passage today we’re going to see how we can have joy in the midst of suffering.

So would you turn with me in your bibles to Philippians 1:19-26. Now we’re going through the book of Philippians and we know that the apostle Paul is the author, and it’s clear that the apostle Paul is writing this letter to Philippian believers. And that while he is writing imprisoned in Rome, we know that he was under house arrest for two years, most likely from 60 or 61 A.D. to 63 A.D. And Paul gives various references to his imprisonment, but he uses literally the word chains. And we know that he was most likely chained 24/7 to a praetorian guard, one of Caesar’s elite guards.

And we saw last week ultimately through these chains Christ had been exalted and the gospel had gone throughout the whole praetorian guard. Now this letter is one of four prison epistles, Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon. And we think that it was written most likely around 62 A.D. but God didn’t tell us when it was written, so obviously that’s not important. What is important is the content of the letter.

Now we know from Acts 16 that Paul and Silas and Timothy and Luke were on what we call Paul’s second missionary journey. Having come from the east they were kept from going south to Asia, and the scripture says, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word in Asia, and they were allowed to go north to Turkey, the scripture says, they were trying to go to Bithynia and the spirit of Jesus did not permit them. And ultimately God led them west, as Paul had a vision of a Macedonian man saying “Come help us.” Ultimately when Paul got there, they went down to the river and there was a lady there named Lydia. And Paul shared the Word of God with Lydia and the Lord opened her heart to understand and believe the truth.

And then we know as the apostle Paul was being pestered by a demon possessed girl, Paul cast out that demon, and ultimately her value in the site of those who made money from her was gone. And so Paul and Silas were thrown into prison, and in this prison they were rejoicing and praising God and singing hymns unto Him. And God cause a great earthquake, and the chains came off and the doors were opened and the jailer at that point thought, “I’m done”. And he was about to commit suicide, and Paul said “Stop, don’t do it, we’re all here.” And he said to him, sirs, what must I do to be saved? And he said,

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believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you and your household. And then it said, Paul spoke the Word to him and his household.

And we have the nucleus of the Philippian church through Lydia, and we have the Philippian jailer and his family. And we saw that from this wonderful beginning, up to the point where Paul writes this letter, that this Philippian church was very dear to the apostle Paul. They were the only church that had shared with him financially during certain elements of the ministry that God had him on. They supported him at least on four different occasions, and perhaps no church had had such loving care for the apostle Paul as the Philippians.

Now I've shared this several weeks in a row, but I like what Harry Ironside writes about this book. He says it is about Christ, it is Christ in all. The first chapter sets forth, as we will see today, Christ is our life. The second chapter, Christ is our example, as we see His humility and obedience. And ultimately we see Christ as our object, to fix our eyes on Christ, the prize, the upward call in Christ Jesus. And Christ is set forth as our strength and supply. We've seen so far in Philippians that Paul and Timothy identify themselves as bondservants of Christ, as *doulos*, this term which meant a slave who had completely yielded their will to the will of their master.

Now obviously Christ is not a bad master, Christ is a good master, so what a blessing it is to yield your will to a good and gracious master who gave Himself for us. They were bondservants of Christ, and the Philippians were called saints, not because of what they did, but because of who they were in, they were in Christ. When you place your faith in Jesus Christ you are given the righteousness of Christ and you are seen as set apart, or holy, or the word saint. And we saw that they were fully supplied by His grace, with that resulting peace.

And hopefully we were all encouraged and rejoicing, when we saw that Paul rejoiced every time he thought of these Philippians, it brought him joy. And we was thankful for God's work in them in the past, and he was so thankful and confident that God would complete that work. He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. And then last week we saw the beginning of Paul's actual correspondence with the Philippians. He shares that his circumstances of his terrible imprisonment have turned out for the progress, or the pioneering, of the gospel. We saw last week, quite possibly the Philippians, as many of us do, see situations in our lives as a hindrance for the gospel. But Paul said it's not way ultimately, as he says, that it has turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. And he gives God the glory because through his imprisonment the whole praetorian guard had come to understand and know about Christ. Some had been saved ultimately as we'll see in chapter 4.

And he said that most of the brethren were confident to speak the Word without fear because of seeing the result of Christ working through Paul in his imprisonment. What wonderful results of what we would think would hinder the ministry, Paul in chains, but ultimately God designed that for His glory. And we saw that even Paul's detractors would ultimately bring God glory, that these men, not false teachers, who Paul would strongly condemn in almost every one of his letters, including Philippians, but these who spoke Christ rightly and preached it, but from the wrong motives, Paul even rejoiced that even in

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their wrong motives that Christ was exalted. And he says, what then, verse 18, chapter 1, only that in every way, whether in pretense or truth, Christ is proclaimed and in this I rejoice, yes, I rejoice.

And that brings us to our passage today, which I believe we're going to see how we can have joy, or maintain joy in the midst of suffering. I think the first point we'll see today, you have an outline in your bibles, if you want to use that, that's great, but if not, just toss it out. I think the first point we're going to see today from the text is that Paul was confident that he would be delivered, or as we will see, vindicated. I'm going to back up to verse 12 in chapter 1 of Philippians, and let's read through this together.

**<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that my imprisonment (or his chains literally) in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, <sup>14</sup> and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, (or we saw last week, literally confident in the Lord, they didn't come to faith but they had confidence now in Christ because of His imprisonment) have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. (God gave them courage not to do ministry but to speak the Word of God without fear. And we see here) <sup>15</sup> Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; <sup>16</sup> the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; <sup>17</sup> the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, (now remember, they proclaim Christ) rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice. (Then our passage today begins in verse 19) <sup>19</sup> For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [Philippians 1:12-19]**

Our passage starts out today in verse 19 with the word "for". And it really is that Paul is referring back to and explaining what he has just said. He says, for I know that this... And we saw right here in this text, and remember from last week that Paul had shared that his circumstances had turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, or the pioneering progress of the gospel. And here in verse 19 we see another reason, I believe, why he can rejoice. He says, end of verse 18, in this I will rejoice, yes and I will rejoice, verse 19, and he's going to explain, for I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance. He knows, he understands something. Paul understood something, the Greek tense shows that he understood something in the past, and that knowledge continues into the present, he knows.

He says, I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance. Well what is he talking about when he says this? What is this? And also, what does he mean by the term deliverance? Well first of all I believe in context this "this" that he is speaking of, this that he knows, are the circumstances surrounding his imprisonment. He knows that because of his imprisonment Christ is using it to proclaim the gospel,

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pioneering advance of the gospel. I know that "this", what Christ is doing in my imprisonment, this will turn out for my deliverance.

What does he mean by deliverance? That word deliverance is "*Soteria*", or salvation, or deliverance. What is he talking about? Is he saying I know that because Christ is proclaimed I'm going to be set free from my chains? Well I think it's possible, but I doubt it actually because he says later on, to live is Christ, to die is gain. He knew that quite possibly he would not be set free of his chains, and quite possibly he could die for Christ. So what is this term deliverance mean? What is he going to be saved from? What is the proclamation of the gospel through his circumstances going to deliver Paul from?

I believe we get some help in this when we recognize that Paul is quoting Job 13. Paul inspired by the Holy Spirit quotes Job 13:6 where he says this shall turn out for my deliverance, I know this. And if you remember the book of Job, if you remember the story of Job, the true story as revealed in scripture, that God allowed Satan to cause Job to suffer greatly. And during that suffering, some of Job's so-called friends came by to comfort him and to encourage him. And one of those friends came by, and his name is Zophar, and in Job 11 Zophar accused Job of being a talker who could not expect to be acquitted or literally justified or vindicated. Job's not going to be vindicated. And then he went on to accuse Job of terrible sin, that's why you're suffering Job, because of the great sin that you have committed. And most likely people were saying the same thing about the apostle Paul, that the apostle Paul was suffering this imprisonment because of sin. And Paul is saying the same thing as Job, I know that this will turn out for my deliverance. Job 13:13, I'll share Job's response to Zophar,

<sup>13</sup> ***"Be silent before me so that I may speak; Then let come on me what may.***

<sup>14</sup> ***"Why should I take my flesh in my teeth, And put my life in my hands?***

<sup>15</sup> ***"Though He slay me, (speaking of the Lord) I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.***

<sup>16</sup> ***"This also will be my salvation, For a godless man may not come before His presence.***

<sup>17</sup> ***"Listen carefully to my speech, And let my declaration fill your ears.***

<sup>18</sup> ***"Behold now, I have prepared my case; I know that I will be vindicated [Job 13:13-18]***

Job understood that he would be vindicated in terms of the accusations that he had sinned, and that was why he was in this circumstance. Certainly God convicted Job of his pride of even questioning Him, and ultimately Job repented, but Job also understood that he would be vindicated. And Paul is quoting Job I believe, that he knows that the things that arise out of his imprisonment, the gospel advancing, will be the very element that God causes to vindicate Paul. I think that's what he's saying. And quite possibly, Paul understood and was thinking of Isaiah 54:17, ***"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me," declares the LORD. [Isaiah 54:17]***

Now what's interesting is we're going to see that Paul simply didn't want to be vindicated for himself, that he rejoiced in the fact that his vindication would bring glory and majesty to Christ. Paul rejoiced

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because he know the results of the proclamation of Christ that arose from his imprisonment would also be his vindication and that God would be glorified.

Now at this point Paul identifies further the means in which he would be vindicated. He says first through prayer, and then through the provision of the Holy Spirit. Verse 18,

***<sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice. <sup>19</sup> For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, [Philippians 1:18-19]***

He says I know this shall turn out for my deliverance through, or by means of your prayers Philippians, and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This is an amazing statement because Paul ties in the will of God to prayer and ultimately the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul understood that God acts according to His will through the prayer of those who pray according to His will. What an amazing thing, that God acts upon prayers according to His will. The fervent, effective prayer of a righteous man availeth much (James 5:16). And Paul understood this, Paul didn't have this fatalistic view of the will of God, that God will do what He's going to do because He's sovereign. He understood the means in which God acts, that He has commanded us and desires us to pray, and to come before Him in dependence, in dependence in Christ.

For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers. And oh believers this ought to be a lesson for us, so often we pray for the wrong things. How many of you would have been praying simply alone for Paul's release? We've got that prayer request from the apostle Paul, he's in chains, it's pretty bad, let's pray for his release. Let's get him on the prayer chain, Paul needs to be released. How many of us would simply pray for the circumstance rather than that Christ would be magnified through that circumstance, through the proclamation in the midst of suffering. Now certainly I'm not saying we don't pray about everything, I wouldn't say don't pray for that ultimately. But ultimately it needs to be in the context of Christ being magnified and Christ being glorified.

Paul was about the proclamation of Christ, and we see that Paul prayed ultimately. Paul actually asked the Ephesians to pray for him, that he would be able to speak boldly. Skip back just a little bit, a few pages to Ephesians 6, and so often we look at the full armor of God and we forget that it is all tied together in prayer. Ephesians 6:18, the apostle Paul says,

***<sup>18</sup> With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, (according to His will ultimately) and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (and here's his request) <sup>19</sup> and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. [Ephesians 6:18-20]***

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That was Paul's prayer request, to proclaim Christ in the midst of his trials. And ultimately as we will see today, that Christ will be glorified. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that Paul didn't pray to be protected from evil men. But ultimately we see in that Paul wanted the Word to go out. I'll share 2 Thessalonians 3:1, Paul writes,

***<sup>1</sup> Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as it did also with you; <sup>2</sup> and that we may be delivered from perverse and evil men; for not all have faith. <sup>3</sup> But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. [2 Thessalonians 3:1-3]***

First and foremost, pray that the Word will spread and be glorified as it was with you. Paul understood and exhorted the Philippians to pray because he knew the advancement of the gospel, that God has ordained that His people pray according to His will, and He acts according to His will. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man, James writes, avails much.

Now he also says it's through the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Paul understood that nothing happens apart from Christ, that apart from Him we can do nothing, that we are not adequate to consider anything as coming from ourselves. We can do nothing apart from Christ. It is only through the provision, or supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that Christ will be proclaimed and magnified. And we stress that in this body that we are inadequate. If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. That we are totally weak, and when we recognize our weakness, Christ is exalted and His power is magnified and perfected in weakness. <sup>19</sup> ***For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ...*** Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit declares the Lord, it's what we have in Zechariah 4:6. It's through God's Spirit that anything for His kingdom is accomplished. And it is accomplished in the yielded believer, yielded to Christ, to whom to live is Christ, as we will see, and to die is gain.

How often we pray, not according to God's will, how often we don't seek God to move in the midst of our circumstances, how often we pray only for the resolution of the difficulty. Folks we need to add into that a prayer that Christ would be magnified through those circumstances, that the Word of God would be proclaimed, that we would be able to proclaim it boldly, not talking obnoxiously or out of our own flesh but boldly as Christ leads. Folks, if you're being obedient to Christ you are going to suffer, people are going to malign you. Paul was being maligned, Job was maligned. If you're following Christ, indeed those who desire to live Godly lives will be persecuted. And one way that we suffer is by being accused wrongly, and that is Satan's method, the accuser of the brethren, and he has many servants who are ready to accuse falsely. And easily this can rob your joy. But Paul understood that even in that, that God was working it out to magnify Christ and he could rejoice.

Do you see your circumstances in Christ as the avenue in which Christ will be magnified? That through prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit God will bring His power to bear on that circumstance so that He will be magnified. How can we be joyful in the midst of suffering? First I think we need to recognize

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when people are accusing us, that God will vindicate us, and the means which He will vindicate us is through the magnification of Christ in the midst of those circumstances, Paul knew that.

And now in related sense, I think Paul understood that suffering would magnify Christ. We'll look at verse 20, but I'll start back at 19 again,

**<sup>19</sup> For I know that this** (this is obviously the circumstances that are bringing the gospel to be proclaimed) **shall turn out for my deliverance** (or vindication) **through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ** <sup>20</sup> **according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. [Philippians 1:19-20]**

Paul states it, it is his earnest expectation and hope that rather than being ashamed, Christ will be exalted now, and whether he dies or lives. The word "earnest expectation" is basically three Greek words Paul puts together, away, head and watch. Speaks of someone outstretching, looking away from everything unto one thing. Paul's earnest expectation is that he will not be put to shame, but that Christ will be proclaimed. That's what he knows will happen through his circumstance. Paul with hope strains forward, focused on Christ being exalted alone, he is confident that he will not be ashamed in Christ. Paul's detractors were trying to shame him, Paul was confident in Christ he would not be shamed. But that Christ, he says, as always, even now, that he would be exalted, in my body, whether by life or death.

This term "exalted" is an interesting term, *megaluno*, it means to make large, it means to magnify, it means to declare great. It is related to the word *megaleios*, which means magnificent. When Christ is exalted, He is shown to be who He really is, He doesn't become magnificent, He doesn't become great, He is seen to be who He really is. He is seen rightfully in His glorious magnificence. And Paul says, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Well what does he mean by exalted in his body? What is he talking about? How is Christ going to be magnified? I believe we'll see it is through the bold proclamation of Christ. Again we see, in the middle of this verse 20, that with all boldness. That term doesn't just speak of being bold, it literally means all speech. It carries the sense of freedom of being able to share courage to speak. With all courage to speak, Christ will be magnified. I believe that's what he's saying. Instead of being put to shame, Paul fully expected to boldly proclaim Christ whether in life or in death. As now, and always.

And Paul was completely about the exaltation and magnification of Christ, and that's why he could rejoice in his circumstances because he knew that the difficulties that God had allowed in his life would bring about the magnification and glorification of Christ. Back earlier, in Philippians 1:18, <sup>18</sup> **What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.** Colossians 1:28, a familiar verse,

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**<sup>28</sup> And we proclaim Him, (speaking of Christ) admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. <sup>29</sup> And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. [Colossians 1:28-29]**

Paul was about the proclamation of Christ, and he knew that whether in life or death that God would bring about the exaltation of Christ through the courageous speech concerning Jesus Christ. Folks there are too many believers who try to manipulate people into the kingdom, rather than boldly and graciously proclaiming Christ in their going, in the circumstances that God ordains. God uses our sufferings and our circumstances go open doors for the Word of God. We pray for God to open doors for the Word, and then difficulties come, that is the answer. And it is clear in our text that Paul understood this completely and in this he could rejoice. Folks if we would just walk by faith and see the circumstances in every avenue, whether it's raising our kids, the things that are the will of God, all those things that are not sin. If we would see those circumstances, difficulties at work, difficulties in relationships, the things God allows, if we would see them as the means which God is using to magnify Christ by giving opportunities to proclaim Him, then we could rejoice in those things. That's why it's such an abomination to complain before God, that's why he says do all things without complaining and grumbling, because you're complaining about the very opportunity that God is giving you to magnify Christ. Paul fully expected not to be shamed, but for Christ to be magnified. And it was his desire to magnify Him, whether in life or in death. He says, verse 20, for Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, magnified, made great, be revealed as He really is, whether by life or by death.

Most certainly, Paul was at death's door in his situation. The Roman government could have certainly executed him at any time. Paul understood that and he desired to proclaim Christ in death or to proclaim Him in life, but that in all things He would be magnified. What an amazing picture of a sold out heart for Christ. Paul fully expected Christ to be exalted, and that sounds like a prideful statement, but no, it's someone who understands truly what has happened to them. They understand truly what has happened to them when they place their faith in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, as we saw last week, understood that he was not his own, but he was bought with a price. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6:19. We saw also in Acts 20 that Paul did not consider his life as dear to him, in any way, that he would finish the course, the ministry that the Lord Jesus had given him. And we see in Galatians 2:20 that Paul says, ***I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. [Galatians 2:20]*** Paul fully expected that if he depended on Christ, and allowed Him to function through him that Christ would be exalted. Paul understood that, that if he abided in Christ, and His Word abided in Him, the result would be Christ being exalted, no matter what the circumstance. And in this, whether by life or death he could rejoice. And in this he found true joy.

Let me ask you this, does your life consist of a desire to magnify Christ? Do you desire people to see Him as He truly is through the difficulties that God allows in your life? Think about a trial you're going through, not because of your sin, but because of your following Christ. Is it your deepest desire to be magnifying, to allow Christ to be magnified in that trial? If it is, you will be joyful in the midst of those

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trials because that is what it is all about, and Paul will say later on, to live is Christ and to die is gain. So how can we remain joyful in the midst of suffering? First we need to recognize that God uses those trials to magnify and glorify Christ, through the bold proclamation of His Word. Sometimes people say, "Oh, they just need to see my life, and that's enough", folks, it's proclaiming the gospel as God leads you to speak of Jesus.

We have in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2, as I shared last week, that we were saved to proclaim His excellencies. And I'm not talking about proclaiming it in our own strength and in a way that is dishonoring to God, in a way that is not gentle, in a way that is not led by Christ. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 2:9,<sup>9</sup> ***But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession*** (These are those who have been born again to a living Hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And he says, why?) ***that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*** [1 Peter 2:9]

Oh folks, how often we proclaim our problems. And we whine and moan, and we don't proclaim the excellencies of Christ who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. Paul understood the reason for living or dying, and that was Christ. Verse 21,<sup>21</sup> ***For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*** [Philippians 2:21]

He begins with the word "for" again, he's explaining even more. He's explaining that he wants Christ to be exalted in his body, whether living or dying, and for him, the ultimate reason why is to live Christ, to die gain. Paul was not preoccupied with life's circumstances, he was preoccupied with Christ. Folks, this is the true Christian experience. And again, I like what Harry Ironside writes concerning this. He says,

*"To me to live is Christ" is the Christian life and experience its fullness. It has often been remarked, and is well worth remembering, that Christians have many experiences which are not properly Christian experience. The man described in the seventh of Romans is undergoing an experience which will be for his future blessing, but it is not proper Christian experience, though it is clearly enough experience of the Christian. Christ himself, so dominating and controlling the believer, that his one object is to live for his glory, is what Paul has before him here. (Christ so dominating that believer that he wants to live for His glory) This should be the experience of Christians at all times. But, alas, how few of us enter into it in its entirety. It implies a surrendered will, and the body yielded to the Lord who is redeemed it, that it may be used only to his praise. This is life in its truest sense, and probably no one entered into it so fully as the apostle Paul.*

To live is Christ, and to die is gain; a simple statement. And now to understand what it means to live is Christ, we need to recognize the things that people live for. Some people live, they get up in the morning think about work, they live for work. They go to sleep thinking about their work. Some live for obtaining wealth, some live for getting out of debt. Some live to seek pleasure, some live for fame. Some live for recognition, some live again to work, some live for power. Some live for their families alone, some live for ministry alone. What would you say that you live for? What do you get up for in the morning? Now

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those examples apart from Christ, to die is to lose everything that you live for. Every single thing I mentioned, if it's not about Christ, you lose that. When you die, you lose your fame, when you die you lose your money, when you die there's no more pleasure. When you die, there's no more power, you lose what you lived for, unless it is Christ.

One pastor writes, "Death is no enemy to the one who Christ is all." Death is not enemy to the one in whom Christ is all. If Christ is not your all, when you die you will suffer some loss. The things that you have focused on, the things you have replaced Christ with. And what we see here is Paul saying, to live is all about Christ, and for the true Christian, that is what the true Christian life is. And when you die living for Christ you gain everything because you gain Christ, and that is, as we will see, very much better.

Paul didn't say, "Oh, it's a wonderful life here, everything's wonderful", he recognized the plan that God had laid out, the sufferings for the glories to follow. And the glories to follow are very much better. But Paul has a dilemma, because he is living for Christ, he has a dilemma, he desires to go home to be with the Lord, but yet he desires to do His will and His work for the fruitful results. Verse 22, I think we see this, to live is Christ, to die is gain explained.

***<sup>22</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; <sup>24</sup> yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. [Philippians 1:22-24]***

Here we have an example of what it means to live is Christ and to die is gain. And he says, he is hard pressed from both directions, he is pressed in, he feels squeezed from both directions. Oh believer, are you squeezed from those directions, to serve Christ or to be with Him? Those are the two options we believers truly have, and God is in charge and sovereign over those options as we will see.

Now in reality, does Paul have a choice to whether he's going to be with the Lord or not, whether he lives or dies? Obviously in context Paul doesn't. What he's trying to say is his desires are split, the possibilities lay before him, the real possibility of him dying is right before him. And he says, that is very much better. But the real possibility of him remaining is there too, and if he is to remain he says, this will be fruitful labor for me and I don't know what to choose. Paul has the desire that every believer in Christ should have to depart to be with Christ for that is much better. That's one half of it. And clearly Paul's theology of death does not include purgatory or soul sleep. To depart and be with Christ. The passage Bob read, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:1, if you want to keep your finger in Philippians and turn there I want to read this. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:1, and Paul is going to share what he knows is true, and how that effects the way he lives. And he's speaking of believers,

***<sup>1</sup> For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, (he's not speaking about tents and houses, he's using a metaphor to speak of our bodies) **we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.** <sup>2</sup> For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; <sup>3</sup> inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. <sup>4</sup> For indeed while we are***

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***in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.*** <sup>5</sup> ***Now He who prepared us for this very purpose*** (the purpose of being swallowed up by life) ***is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.*** (When you became a believer in Jesus Christ, He gave you His very Spirit as a pledge to the redemption of your bodies, your bodies will be redeemed if you are saved) <sup>6</sup> ***Therefore, being always of good courage,*** (oh believer, I wish that could be said of all of us) ***and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord--*** <sup>7</sup> ***for we walk by faith, not by sight--*** <sup>8</sup> ***we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.*** [2 Corinthians 5:1-8]

What Paul died, his spirit went directly to be with the Lord, absent from the body, present with the Lord. And Paul says, this is very much better. Back to Philippians.

He understood that the glories to follow did not compare with the sufferings now. And that is why he fixed his mind and hope and heart on Christ and on the eternal things. Paul understood because he had his sins forgiven, because he had been declared righteous in Christ, because he had been united to Christ, that because when he repented and placed his faith in Jesus Christ that he was given all the benefits that Christ did for him, that Christ's death, burial and resurrection now applied to the apostle Paul, that when he died he would go into the presence of a Holy God. He would go into the presence of His Savior without sin. Paul understood that.

And folks, some of you today have not had your sins forgiven, you are in your sins, and if you were to die, and there is the real possibility that you will die, the death rate is one per person. If you die, you will go into the presence of the Living God, and if you go into the presence of the Living God in your sin, scripture says, it is a tarrying thing, terrifying. God is saying to you it is a tarrying thing, to fall into the hands of the living God. Oh it is precious to God, the death of His godly ones, it is so precious to Him when His believers pass away. But it's a terrifying thing, if you reject Christ, it is a terrifying thing. And I exhort you today to confess your sin and to place you faith in Jesus Christ, so that you don't say to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Now when we completely live for Christ, this means when we die we lose nothing. If we've been building our ministries on wood, hay and stubble, and our own works, when we die we lose! That's loss, even for the believer. When we completely live for Christ, abiding in Him, when we die we gain, because we gain Christ. Now Paul had a dilemma because he desired also to stay on an minister to the Philippians. Verse 22,

<sup>22</sup> ***But if I am to live on in the flesh,*** (if this is the possibility, if God spares my life) ***this will mean fruitful labor for me;*** (he's confident that abiding in Christ will produce fruit) ***and I do not know which to choose.*** <sup>23</sup> ***But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;*** <sup>24</sup> ***yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.*** [Philippians 1:22-24]

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Dying would be much more wonderful, going into the presence of the Lord. If Caesar was to execute me now, that would be much better. And even in that, he prayed that Christ would be exalted in death. But it's necessary for him to stay on. Why? For your sake. To live is Christ, to serve Christ, to serve His people for His glory. What do you live for? Do you live for getting a paycheck? Do you live for just raising your children? Not saying you're not supposed to get a paycheck, not saying you're not supposed to not raise your children, but is that what you live for? Paul was faced with the very real possibility of death, and he recognized it was much better, but staying here was needed for the sake of the Philippian church. That's the heart of Christ. Paul had a singular mindset of seeking Christ to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and within that to serve his Master.

He says but to live on, if I am to live on in the flesh this will mean fruitful labor. Folks, if you live on in the flesh as a believer, will there be fruitful labor for you, or loss? There are many Christians who do not understand what it means to live on in the flesh, who do not understand what it means to live for Christ, who do not understand that we have been crucified with Christ, who do not set their minds on the things above, rather than the things of earth because we have died and our lives are hidden in Christ. Who do not understand that true joy comes from intimate fellowship with the Living God in the context of faith and obedience. And Paul says in verse 25,

***<sup>25</sup> And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, [Philippians 1:25]***

That's why if I stay on, the fruitful labor will be your progress and your joy in the faith, you're going to progress, you're going to trust more, faith comes from hearing, hearing from the Word of Christ. Progress and joy in the faith. And then he says in verse 26, we see the results,

***<sup>26</sup> so that (or "in order that") your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again. [Philippians 1:26]***

Now that's the NASB translation, and usually I prefer it over other translations, but here it kind of skews the meaning. All we're reading throughout this passage, you know, exalting Christ, exalting Christ, exalting Christ, and then we see proud confidence in me, that doesn't make sense. Literally, in the Greek it goes like this, "*so that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus, in me.*" Your boasting may abound, your confidence may abound in Christ, basically because of what Christ has done through me, Paul is saying. He's saying your joy and progress in the faith is going to produce a boasting in Christ that came through the opportunities that God gave me, that's what Paul is saying. And when they get together, if they get together, they're going to rejoice together in the work that Christ did. Isn't that not what we do when we get together and we see what Christ has done in our lives, we rejoice in that.

And Paul says, so that your boasting you may abound in Christ Jesus, in me, through my coming again to you. Folks, it's all about Christ being magnified, that's the Christian life. The Christ-ian life. It's about Christ, it's not about us, it's not about how to fix your finances, it's not about how to fix your marriage, it's not about us! It's about Christ. When Christ is primary and we live as Christ, he works out those

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other things, seek first the kingdom. And there's many a charlatan that comes along to try to do the things of Christ, rather than to abide in Christ. It's very subtle.

For Paul, to live is Christ, he was not preoccupied with circumstances. And this doesn't speak of just service, it speaks of intimacy. To live is Christ. Philippians 3, if you skip down a little bit, as Paul compares the stuff of his old life, which he considers as dung, it's worthless. All of the plaques on the walls, all of the degrees, all the stuff Paul did. Philippians 3:7,

***<sup>7</sup> But whatever things were gain to me, (I counted them as gain, on the sheet, these on the ledger, these things were gain to me in my mindset, this was gain, whatever was gain to me) those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, <sup>9</sup> and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, <sup>10</sup> that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; [Philippians 3:7-10]***

With that mindset in suffering, you will have joy. To live is Christ. Christ, as he would share with the Colossians, who is our life. To know Christ and please Him was Paul's chief aim. Everything else was worthless and it would be loss. What things are you holding onto that you will lose? For what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Are you holding onto your life? For Paul, to know Christ was to please Him. Jack Crabtree writes concerning this passage,

*At this point, I must raise a question. Have we contemporary Christians lost sight of this aspect of the meaning of human existence? To live is Christ to die is gain. Have we made the proclamation and propagation of the gospel an aspect of the transcendent cause which gives meaning to our lives in the here and now? Or are we just like our neighbors? Perhaps we, too, make the supreme purpose of our lives "to have fun," existing here and now to own and to enjoy things--as we await our future entrance into the Kingdom of God? Something is wrong with that attitude. It is not the attitude of our Lord. It is not the attitude of the apostles. Their lives were not their own; they were servants of another (and servants of Christ). They lived not for themselves, but for the accomplishment of God's purposes. And God's purposes involve seeking out and raising up a chosen people for Himself (and building them up).*

Is to live Christ for you? What would you fill in the blanks? To live is what? Honestly, what do you live for? So how do we find joy in the midst of trials, true joy? In a nutshell we need to fully live for Christ, Christ needs to be our life, and when Christ is our life, then whatever happens is in His will. And whatever happens in His will will bring Him glory, and we can rejoice about that. And that brings us true joy. Some of you today live for everything but Christ. Honestly in your heart, you don't think about

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Christ, you don't care about Christ, and that is an indication you don't know Christ. And if you die, you will lose everything. You're starting to see that loss right now, you can't hold onto it. And you will enter into terrifying expectation of judgment. And everything you live for does not bring joy, but brings less satisfaction, you want more. Only living for Christ will bring true joy, and you can't live for Christ unless you are redeemed, unless you've repented of your sin and trusted in Him as Savior. And I exhort you and beg you on behalf of God, be reconciled to God because He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf, that we might have the righteousness of God in Christ.

For those of us who are believers, have we lost site? What do we live for? Have we all of a sudden started to live for taking care of our homeschooling, have we started to live for taking care of our families, have we started to live for our work, have we started to live for ministry, have we started to live for everything but Christ? We need to repent. Lord God, these things may be what You will have me to do, but I have put them before You. Lord God help me to live for You, to see everything as in Your sovereign hands, to trust You and obey you, to recognize my life is hidden in Christ. Just confess it, we battle with it every day. Confess it, the self-centeredness, and be restored, and live for His glory.

## **Prayer**

Father, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the example of Your servant Paul who was flesh like us, but yet sinful flesh. Father we thank you that by Your power and strength he could say, to live is Christ, to die is gain. Father thank You for that example. And Father I pray for anyone in here who does not know Your Son, which means they do not know You, that they would be convicted of their sin, that they lie guilty before a Holy God. They are fully guilty for their actions, their attitudes, their words, and they deserve judgment. But Father today may they recognize that You poured out Your wrath and judgment upon Your Son in their place, that He took sin in His body, the perfect spotless lamb of God. He bore our sins in His body on the cross. And Father I pray that those who don't know You would come before You and cry out for a Savior, Jesus Christ. That they would believe that He rose from the dead, bringing redemption from sin. And Father for those of us who know You, may we be convicted of areas in our lives where we don't live for You, where our life is not about You, whether they're good areas. I pray that if we're deceived in our hearts that You would reveal that, that we would see everything, that we could honestly say before You and no one else, to live is Christ and to die is gain. We pray this now in Jesus name. Amen.

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