

The Christian's Confession Concerning Life and Death

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Philippians 1 is the scripture reading this evening. The text is the 21st verse of this chapter. Philippians 1. Paul is writing this letter under house arrest in Rome, so he speaks here of his bonds and he talks about how the Lord is using this for the spread of the gospel. Philippians 1.

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; 6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: 7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. 8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. 12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; 13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; 14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. 15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: 16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: 17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. 18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. 19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 According to my earnest

expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; 26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. 27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; 30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

The text this evening is verse 21,

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is the year 62 AD. The Apostle Paul has been arrested as an insurrectionist in Jerusalem. He has been transported to Rome and he is currently under house arrest in the capital city of the Roman Empire awaiting his trial before the emperor, the infamous Caesar Nero. Day and night, he is chained to a soldier of the palace guard, that elite group of Roman soldiers who who even serve as the personal bodyguards to the emperor himself. There's evidence that maybe Paul is even dwelling in the palace area because he speaks of that, "So that my bonds in Christ," verse 13, "are manifest in all the palace and in all other places." But from an earthly perspective, Paul's life here hangs in the balance. Caesar has the power to do what he wants, he can spare Paul's life or he can sentence Paul to be executed, and the question is what will happen? Well, the saints at Philippi have heard about Paul's imprisonment, and they had become worried for him, and they sent him a care package by the hands of Epaphroditus to encourage him. They sent Epaphroditus himself to encourage Paul, and of course, they also now want to hear from Paul how he is doing.

You can imagine how an ordinary believer finding himself in Paul's circumstances might have been greatly discouraged. He's imprisoned. He is in a new city that he has never been in before. He is facing a possible death sentence, and he also knows that there are going to be many who are deeply saddened if he is put to death. You can understand how someone in these circumstances would be greatly discouraged. From one point of view, you might say Paul had yet so much life to live, and yet Paul, in these circumstances, is

full of joy. In fact, this whole letter to the Philippians, written during the time of Paul's imprisonment, is known as the epistle of joy. Even just reading this first chapter, you get a clear sense of that. Paul is full of joy in this letter. Later on, chapter 4, "Rejoice in the Lord always and again, I say rejoice." And the question comes: what explains this joy? In the midst of such discouraging circumstances from an earthly point of view, how can Paul be so full of joy? Well, the apostle gives us the answer and he gives us the answer with what is one of the most dramatic statements that comes off the pen of the Apostle Paul and he states it with conviction and with triumph. How can Paul have such confidence, such joy, such triumph in the midst of such discouraging circumstances? Well, his answer is to the point, he says, "For me to live, Christ, and to die gain. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

That's a very fitting word for the occasion of confession of faith. This is, in essence, the confession that Lydia and Weston made before the consistory, and the confession that they made before the congregation and before the world. From their hearts with conviction, they said, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." In fact, this is the confession of every child of God. Now, admittedly, sometimes it only comes off as a faint echo. Sometimes we even have to wrestle with ourselves to make this confession because the sinful flesh wars against this confession, and yet for the true child of God, it is there. We feel it. We understand it. We are truly convicted by it. Yes, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain. This is the confession Jesus Christ has worked within my heart, within our hearts and within our mouths by his sovereign grace, and we can say it with triumph even in the midst of challenging circumstances.

Well, this is the glorious confession that we look at in the sermon tonight. We take as our theme "The Christian's Confession Concerning Life and Death." We'll look at three things. First, the Christian's confession concerning life; second, the Christian's confession concerning death; and then the Christian's attitude regarding both. We first look at the first half of the text, "For to me to live is Christ," and I want to begin by looking at that very first word, the word "for," because with that word the apostle is giving us an explanation. He cueing us that he's now going to give us an explanation of what he has just said, and so I want to back up a bit and make sure we understand what Paul has just said. As I already said, Paul is in prison in Rome, at least he's under house arrest. He's awaiting trial before Caesar and he is awaiting an uncertain future. He's in very real danger of being put to death. Nero is unpredictable. Nero is a pagan, Nero is only concerned about Nero, and Nero will quickly put to death or destroy anyone or anything that is a threat to his empire. In just two years time, Nero is going to be burning Christians, using Christians as lanterns in his garden, burning them for pleasure. In just two years time, Nero is going to bring a fierce persecution against the Christians in Rome.

Already at this time, Paul is in no small danger and yet notice how he puts it in verse 12. Imprisoned in Rome, Paul tells the saints, "Don't be sad for me because you know what? What has happened unto me has actually resulted in the furtherance of the gospel, the good news of salvation." Paul says, "The name of Jesus Christ is being spread throughout the palace of the emperor. People are coming to know who Jesus Christ is." In fact, he

ends the letter by saying chiefly those of Caesar's household greet you. Caesar's own servants and slaves are coming to a saving knowledge of salvation in Jesus Christ, and Paul rejoices in that. In verse 14, Paul adds and he adds to that and he says, "My fellow saints who see my boldness to speak the gospel are further emboldened themselves to keep speaking about Jesus Christ." And so what is happening is that here in Rome, in the very epicenter of the world, the Roman Empire, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being spread. We thought that this imprisonment might be not such a good thing, but Christ has used it for the spread of the gospel and Paul says, "And therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice," verse 18.

And then starting in verse 19, Paul says, "I know that this imprisonment with all its sufferings, with all its woes, it will all work out for for that which is best for me. It will turn out," he says, "to my salvation." And what is salvation for Paul? Well, he ties that intimately to the glory of Jesus. That, in a sense, is salvation for Paul. He says, "What is my salvation? What is my highest good? What is best for me?" He says, "What is my salvation is that Christ be glorified through me." And Paul says, verse 20, "I know that the Holy Spirit will never put me to shame. I know that whatever happens, the Holy Spirit will equip me and give me boldness and the name of Jesus Christ will be magnified in and through me." And Paul says, "That's what I rejoice in," end of verse 18, "therein I rejoice." Paul says, "Whatever happens, I know Christ Jesus will use it for the glory of his name. I know Jesus will use me and my life and my death, whatever may happen, he will use it for the glory of his name and I rejoice in that." And that's where we come to this verse, the text. Paul says, "Why? Why will I rejoice in these things, not even knowing the outcome of my imprisonment, yet knowing that Christ will use all of this for the glory of his name? Why will I rejoice? I will rejoice for, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Christ and his glory is everything to me."

That's the word "for" at the beginning of the text, "To me to live is Christ. That's why I rejoice." And then notice the words that follow that first word, "to me," Paul says, "to me," and these words at the beginning of the text tell us that these words receive the emphasis, Paul is emphasizing this, and he's getting very personal here. He says, "This is not how my parents think. This isn't just how my friends think." Paul says, "It really doesn't matter what anyone else thinks, what my parents think, what my friends think or what the world thinks, or what the culture around me thinks. For me, what is the reality of my life is this, to live is Christ." Paul says, "The reason and purpose of my life, what is the overshadowing concern and preoccupation of my life is Christ." You look at the very center of Paul's life and what do you see? You see Christ. Christ is the center of Paul's life. Paul's life revolves entirely around Christ.

"To me," and then notice the word "Christ. For to me to live, Christ." Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah. The one whom the Father has anointed to be the Savior of the world. The one who is at the same time co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit, who is the second person of the Trinity who has come in our flesh and who died for Paul, who gave up his life on the cross for Paul, who bore the curse that was upon Paul. This same Christ who is now Paul's chief prophet and teacher, his only high priest and his eternal king, this is who Paul is talking about, his Savior, the Christ. And I point that out because you

know there was a time when Paul didn't know Jesus as his Christ. In fact, there was a time when Paul was adamantly hostile against the Christ. There was a time when Paul was not living for Christ but Paul was living for Paul. Remember, Paul had been a Pharisee and we considered that this morning, some of how the Pharisees behaved and how offensive it was. Well, Paul himself had been a Pharisee. Chapter 3 of this same letter he says, "I was a Pharisee of the Pharisees." His life was all about himself, his own self-righteousness and his own praises and his own glory, and he was so offended at the name Jesus, that Jesus should be called the Christ, that he wanted to snuff out that name of Jesus. He was even going from city to city with documents in his hand, having authority to arrest the Christians. And then suddenly it all changed for Paul, didn't it? You remember what happened. There Paul is on the Damascus Road heading to Damascus to terrorize the Christians there, and suddenly Christ apprehends Paul and Christ Jesus knocks Paul off his horse, and Christ Jesus lays his hands of grace upon Paul and he radically changes who Paul is, so that even there in that moment, Paul's immediate response is, "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?"

And from that moment on, Paul was a changed man. He knew who the Christ was. He was given a true and living faith. He knew Jesus as the Christ. He embraced Jesus as the Christ. He confessed Jesus to be his righteousness and he counted all his own righteousness as dung that he might know Jesus as the Christ. And from that moment on Christ Jesus was Paul's entire life, and that's what Paul is confessing here in this passage, "For to me to live is Christ." And then also notice this, beloved, notice how the King James points it out to us that the word "is" appearing twice in this text, isn't there in the original. In the original, there's no verb in this sentence. Paul's very short and terse, and he's even maybe, we might say, a little dramatic with these words. He wants to put it powerfully, triumphantly. He says, "For to me to live, Christ, and to die gain. For me, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

These are very powerful and triumphant words even as he's shackled to the soldier there under house arrest, but I think we need to go a little further here and try to breakdown what all this actually means. What does it mean for Paul to now say to live is Christ? To live is Christ. I've got a few words here that might help us appreciate this language. I've got six things here. First, when Paul says, "to me to live is Christ," what Paul is saying is this, "The purpose of my life, the purpose of my life is Christ and revolves around Christ." That is, Christ is the priority of Paul's life. Christ is the passion of Paul's life. Paul doesn't even identify himself here by his hardships and his afflictions. I mean, he could have done that. Paul does not identify his life by what has happened to him. He doesn't even identify his life by his family or his finances or children or his sin. Paul's thoughts do not revolve here around his house or his work or his holidays. But his thoughts, his life revolves around Jesus Christ.

Paul wakes up on Monday morning and he looks at his planner for the day and what does he see on his planner? He sees this, "Living for Christ," so that there are no competing agendas for Paul in his earthly life. There are no side issues for Paul. Christ is the controlling factor of his life. When it comes to Paul's possessions, when it comes to his work, when it comes to his career or education or relationships, it all revolves around

Christ. Christ is the center, the focus, the purpose of Paul's whole existence. Christ is the one after whom his heart beats. Christ is the one whom he seeks to honor. Christ is the purpose of his life. Christ, who suffered for us in the flesh, he is the purpose of Paul's life so that if Christ would have Paul be in prison in Rome, there in prison in Rome Paul gladly serves Christ. If Christ would have Paul be put to death, Paul gladly serves Christ. And if Christ should will that Paul be set free and live on a few more years serving Christ here on earth, Paul gladly serves Christ. Christ is the purpose of his life. In Paul's life with whatever Paul does, it is Christ who calls the shots. His law is written on Paul's heart so that everything in Paul's life must yield and give way to Christ, his will, his kingdom, his glory. And isn't that how we pray too when we start our prayers, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done," and everything else, everything else is subservient to that and we ask for it for the service of these petitions. That's Christ for Paul. Christ is the purpose of Paul's life.

Second, when Paul says, "to me to live is Christ," what Paul is saying is this, "The source of my life, the source of my life is Christ. This life I live, this is not the life that my earthly parents gave me. No, but this life I live, I live because Christ has raised me to this life. I have my life out of Christ." As Paul himself says in Galatians 2:20, "This life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. He died for me and he rose for me. I am crucified with him, nevertheless I live and I live because Christ lives in me. Christ has redeemed me, he has regenerated me. This life I now live is the life of Christ in me. This is my life. I am striving to live out of the new man exclusively. That's my life. That's the only life I want to live, the life of the new man."

So the source of his life is Christ. Third, when Paul says, "to me to live is Christ," what Paul is saying is this, "The strength of my life, the strength of my life is Christ." That's how he ends this letter. Philippians 4:13, we all know it. Paul writes, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. Oh yes, except I abide in Christ, I can do nothing. Outside of Christ, I can do nothing. But abiding in Christ, I live. Jesus is my strength. My life is sustained by him and my life is empowered by him." So that as he says in Colossians 1:29 which he also writes from house arrest, while he's under house arrest, he writes, "Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." The strength of Paul's life, Christ.

Fourth, when Paul says, "to me to live is Christ," what Paul is saying is this, "The confidence of my life. The confidence of my life is Christ." Paul knows his life is hid safely in Christ. Paul knows he does not belong to himself but with body and soul both in life and death, he belongs to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ who has fully satisfied for all his sins and delivered him from all the power of the devil. Paul's confidence is no longer in himself. He's been there, he's done that. No, he's been changed now. His confidence is in Christ alone for his righteous standing before God and also for the supply of all his needs. He even says that to the Philippians, "For my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ." He says that at the end of this very same letter. The confidence of Paul is Christ.

Fifth, when Paul says, "to me to live is Christ," what Paul is saying is this, "The model of my life, the model, the pattern, the example of my life, that what I'm trying to imitate is Christ. The way that Christ walked, that's the way I want to walk. I am being conformed to the image of Christ and I want to be conformed to his image more and more. I want to talk as Christ talked. I want to think as Christ thought. I want to walk as Christ walked." Paul says that in the very next chapter, chapter 2 verse 5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ." A mind of humility. A mind of seeking the things of others and not just the things of self. A mind of self-denial. A mind of obedience and living for others, loving others. Let the life Christ lived be the life you live. That's what life is for Paul.

And then sixth, when Paul says, "to me to live is Christ," what Paul is saying is this, "The goal of my life, the purpose of my life, the source of my life, the strength of my life, the confidence of my life, the motto of my life, and now the goal of my life is Christ." Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 5:15, "And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." All my life has Christ as its goal, and all my life has Christ as its joy. In sum, Christ is my everything. Even now in my present earthly existence, the only thing that I count life, the only thing I count life is found in that name, Christ. All the rest I count to be but death. Ask me what is the joy, what is the hope, what is the ideal, the ambition? What is the sum and substance of my life? I reply, Christ. To think Christ is life. To will Christ is life. To desire Christ is life. To be near Christ is life. To have fellowship with Christ is life. To live apart from him is death. 'Tis good to seek his face, to know with spiritual knowledge that he is my Lord, and I am his own. To taste and to realize and to drink in the truth that I have been his from before the foundations of the world, and that I was in him when he died and I was with him when he rose again from the dead, and that even now I have been set in heavenly places with him, that is life. To mind his mind. To think his thoughts. To will his will. To move with all the members of my body in subjection to him so that everything is being pressed into the service of his glory, this is my definition of life. Its contents and its riches, its joys and its hopes, to me to live is Christ. I am completely sold over to Christ. My life is his.

Oh yes, to others things might be different. To the businessman of the world, he says, that man says, "My life is my gold. I live for gold." To the student of the world, he says, "To me to live is learning. I live for my learning." To the man of the world, he says, "To me this world is living." He's living for the things of the world. But what does the child of God say whether as a businessman or as a student or as a mother or anything else, he says, "To me to live is Christ." By his Holy Spirit dwelling in me, Jesus is the life of my life. He controls my heart and he controls the spiritual direction of all my thinking and willing, of all my hearing and speaking and seeing and living. He opens my eyes so that now I see and judge everything spiritually according to his estimation of everything. I weigh everything in my life in the light of the reality of Jesus Christ and who I am as one who belongs to him. That's life. I weigh everything in the light of the reality of Jesus Christ and who I am, who I am as one who belongs to Christ.

That's Paul's confession regarding life, "If I'm going to live, it's going to be Christ. For Christ, out of Christ, with Christ, trusting Christ, living unto Christ Jesus, my Lord." And

the question that comes to us this evening is this: is that our confession regarding life? And that's what makes this confession so powerful. It is so all-embracing. There are no qualifications at all. Is this our confession regarding life? It's quite humbling but it's quite a beautiful thought, too, that this is our confession. In part in your schooling, is this your confession? In your friendships, in your dating life, in your church life, in your family relationships, in your vocation, in the hardships of life. If I'm going to live, my life has no value except I'm focused on pressing it all in the service of Christ, except I'm enjoying it all with Christ, except I'm going through it all, trusting Christ, for Christ, out of him, with him, serving him.

It's so easy to dwell on the things here below. "For me to live is my work." That can easily start becoming the reality. That can be true for me as pastor. This is reason for me to do self-examination so that Christ isn't my work anymore, but my work is, my work is. I forget to live for Christ. I'm doing things maybe for myself, to be highly esteemed in the congregation. No. Christ. "For me to live is my hobbies," especially when the time is weary and we need a break and then, I mean, the Lord gives us hobbies and recreation for refreshment certainly, but then we can kind of get this sickly approach where I'm living for my hobbies. "For me to live is my grandchildren. Oh how I love my grandchildren. They are the world to me." Whoa. If I don't have Christ, what are my grandchildren? Christ is the world to me and I count my grandchildren as a blessing from him. "For me to live is my vacations." That and then Christ Jesus, well, he's just the cherry on top. Is that what Christ is? Practically speaking in my life, is that who Christ is?

"Well Paul, how can you have joy in your life? How can you rejoice in the midst of such distressing circumstances facing a death sentence? How can you have joy, beaming with joy in the light of such an uncertain future?" I will tell you how I can rejoice, "To me to live is not Paul. Forget Paul. To me to live is Christ." And that's the confession the child of God makes. Yes, as I said it already, sometimes it comes out as an echo. We struggle with it because that inner warfare between the spirit and the flesh, but then when you hear this confession, it really shouldn't be that way, should it? We know better. If I have Christ, I have everything. If you have Christ, you have glory. If you have Christ, then you have the awesome Maker of heaven and earth as your God and your Father. Just imagine if we didn't have Christ, beloved. Just imagine how terrifying, how empty, how vain life would be if we didn't have Christ Jesus.

Well, what Paul says here is an exalted statement. Maybe to us it seems high above us. Paul is so triumphant and maybe right now I'm not there and I'm feeling lowly and maybe I see this hasn't always been my confession. Well, even if that's the case, as we look at this text, may this text turn our hearts once again unto Jesus, and may this verse pull our hearts to where our hearts truly need to be tonight, resting in the primacy and the centrality of Jesus Christ in my life. He's better than everything in the world. He's better than my grandchildren. He's better than work. He's better than vacation. And it's only indeed when I'm enjoying all these things out of him, and I'm enjoying these things with him, and I'm using these things for him that all these things in their life have their sweetness and have their worth.

To live is Christ. That's the Christian's confession regarding life and, congregation, if we understand that, well, then what follows in the rest of the text is rather easy to understand. "And to die is gain." To die is gain. We can treat that rather briefly compared to what we've already said because we've already laid the foundation. If to live is Christ, well, then to die is gain because to die is have more of Christ in every single way. It's really rather straightforward and yet it's an amazing confession because this is no abstract theology for Paul, this is not Paul writing from his La-Z-Boy. This is Paul staring down the gun barrel. This is Paul coming to terms with his own earthly existence, facing the reality he could be executed shortly. And besides that, Paul knows how much work there is still left for him to do, how much work there is available for him to do should he keep living. He mentions that. He knows how good it would be if he could continue, and how much of a blessing he could still be to those around him, and an encouragement because he knows the Lord would use him for that.

And just think of how much Paul would be leaving behind if he were put to death, all his friendships, all his gifts. we might say what potential for Paul to still be such a rich blessing to others, and yet Paul says, "to die is gain." Paul weighs everything in the balance. He puts in the balance all the weight of what he would lose in death over against all that he would gain in death, and to Paul it's pure gain. It's pure gain for Paul. Oh death, death is the last enemy and death is unnatural. We love our families. We love the good things that God gives us here below. We love our own bodies. I don't want to part with my own body. And perhaps we struggle with making this confession. Perhaps when we think about our loved ones, we don't want them to have to experience the death of a loved one, and yet at the same time for the child of God, all the things that are precious to us here below are precious to me inasmuch as I enjoy them in Christ Jesus and with Christ Jesus and to the glory of Christ Jesus. And if Jesus should call me home, I know he will take care of my loved ones. I know he will watch over them. And I know all my loved ones in Christ are going to heaven. I know I will see them again. We're all walking this pilgrim pathway together and for me to die is for me to finally be finished with my sojourn and to be in the presence of my Savior. Death will usher me. Death is the passageway. Death is what ushers me into the presence of my Savior. Death for me will not be a tragedy. "Death for me," Paul says, "will be a triumph because death will bring more of Christ to me and bring more of me to Christ."

Death is gain and what gain it is. No more pain. No more sorrow. No more weak faith. No more sin. No more sinful nature. No more financial worry. No more stress. No more arguments. No more cancer. No more any hindrances that hinder me from serving Christ and enjoying Christ. No more spiritual warfare. That's gain. We will be living in a perfect place of heavenly glory, living fullness of life, enjoying perfect freedom, and all of this is gain. Oh yes, when I die, I may lose my place in the pew in church. I think of even Arvind's place, empty in the back of church. When I die, I lose my place in the pew in church but I gain a place among the holy choir in heaven. When I die, yes, I may lose my weekly Sabbath joys here below, but when I die I gain an eternal Sabbath of peace and rest in glory. Yes, when I die, in a sense, I lose my family and friends here below for a time, but I gain many more friends in heaven, than all the friends I had here below. And what is more, though for a time I'd be cut off from these friends and family here on earth

for the time, I will be rejoined with them in heaven in future. Yes, when I die, maybe I leave behind a very successful business or great wealth, but in heaven I gain a wealth that outshines all the wealth that I could lay my hands on here below. Yes, when I die, I may lose all the knowledge that I accumulated through much study and toil in this life, but in heaven I'm going to gain a knowledge that far infinitely surpasses any puny knowledge I gained in this life. In death, I put off sickness and I inherit eternal health. In death, I put off poverty and I am clothed in riches. In death, I finally get to put down the sword. I get to take off the Christian armor. I get to walk off the battlefield. I get to be received into the arms of my Savior and I get to enter into the midst of the church triumphant in glory.

And what will be the gain especially? It will be more of Christ. Now I know in part, I know my Savior in part, but then I shall know even as he knows me, even as I am known. Now I know in part what it is to live out of Christ, and I experience sometimes those mountaintops of faith and they are exhilarating and they are the joy of life. Now I know in part but when I get to glory, it will far surpass that. Now I know in part what it is to live out of Christ and for Christ and to Christ. Now I know in part what it is to have the mind of Christ, to think his thoughts, to will his will, to taste his goodness, and to know who he is as my life's joy. Now I know it all in part, but when I get to glory I will know it perfectly.

When I get to heaven, I will see him. I will see Jesus Christ in the flesh, glorified flesh, but in his body and soul the one who shed his blood on the cross for me. I will see him face to face and I will see his loving smile resting upon me. When I get to heaven, I will see God in the face of Jesus Christ. You know, this is kind of a tangent, but back in Randolph going from the parsonage to church, it was a block away so I would walk back and forth to catechism class, and we'd have these experiences more often, but this just comes to my mind, and I would be walking home from catechism on Wednesday night after catechism, and I would be so thrilled with having spent three hours in God's word with his people. And then you walk home and it's like, "I just want to see him more. I just want to see him. Lord, to walk by faith is a struggle and I know there's more, give me more." And then you long for the day when your faith will be sight and you will see him as you've always wanted to see him. And we will get to enjoy him and worship him and live our lives perfectly full of him. Christ will fill us up in body and soul and in heaven we will get to live for him perfectly.

To live is Christ and to die is only gain. That's the Christian's confession. But now, even as we consider all of this, let's not get off course, so very briefly we need to ask what is my attitude regarding both these things, because maybe even just the way that I presented it, we might be asking does this mean we all just want to die and go to heaven? Well, it's not quite like that although we look forward to heaven, but it's not quite like that because in the end the attitude of Paul and the attitude of us as God's people is this: it's not about me and it's not ultimately about gain for me, because it's not about me, it's about Christ. It's not just about going to heaven and getting gain, it's about Christ. I'm all about Christ. That's at the heart of this confession, and part of what that means is this: if Christ wants me to keep living and keep serving him here below, and maybe it's toilsome and maybe it's with a broken heart, and maybe it's a difficult calling, well, then I rejoice in that, and I

get busy in that because whether I live or whether I die, it's about Christ. That's the Christian's attitude.

Lydia and Weston, this is the Christian's attitude. By God's grace and by the working of the Holy Spirit, this is also your attitude. You have it. You've confessed it. You have Jesus as your Lord and Savior. You know what the name of Jesus means. You have been made a believer. You are one of God's sheep. You know the wonderful voice of the Good Shepherd. How blessed you are. You have Jehovah as your God and you are his children, even from henceforth unto eternity, and he has worked this blessed confession in your hearts. Weston and Lydia, remember this confession. Remember it. It's worth remembering every day. Live according to this confession. That's where your joy will be found in the sorrows, in the struggles, in the challenges, in the joys. This is where the joy is found. It's about Christ. It's about your God. It's about your King. You're living for him and you live for him because you know he is worthy. This is your life's end, the chief end of man. Whatever calling God gives you, whatever circumstances he leads you through, dating, relationships, school, work, family life, whatever it is, live for him and he will cause you to experience that living for Christ is life itself. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father, this is a confession that comes from heaven and we thank thee that thou hast worked it in our hearts here below. Work it in us more and more, cause us to experience the joy of living according to it. Give us more of Christ. Give us to see him more. Give us to dwell with him more intimately, to trust him more fully, to serve him more faithfully. And then cause us to know that when this life comes to its end and thou dost call us home, it is all gain, pure gain for us, thy people. Bless this preaching to our hearts and shape our lives by it. For Jesus' sake we pray. Amen.