

Series: Philippines Series 2024

Title: To Live or Die

Text: Php 1: 21-26

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Philippines 1: 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.

Paul is in prison. But he repeatedly he calls himself, “The prisoner of Jesus Christ.” The Spirit of God assured Paul. Therefore Paul assured his brethren. This is Paul’s assurance and this is the assurance of each of God’s saints.

Proposition: Being one with Christ, through God-given faith, no spiritual bad could come to Paul. If he lived he would live for Christ, ministering to his brethren. If he died, he would be with Christ forever. That is the same assurance for each of God’s saints

FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

To some life is being healthy. For others life is family. To most life is gain in this world: their career, their house, their land, their money. But to Paul, and to God’s saints born of the Spirit of God, to live is Christ. It is so because Christ is the Life of his saints.

John 14:6 Jesus saith...,I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

Christ is each of these because he is our Righteousness.

Christ is the Way because he is the Righteousness of God. The Lord Jesus is the only Righteousness of the believer. He is the only Righteousness God will receive.

Christ is the Truth because he is Righteousness. He established the law in Righteousness so that God is just to show his people mercy. David knew Christ would prolong his life making David abide before God forever, because on the cross, Christ would *prepare mercy and truth to preserve him*.

Psalms 61: 6: Thou wilt prolong the king’s life: *and* his years as many generations. 7: He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.

Psalms 85:10: [on the cross in Christ] Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other*.

Truth is Righteousness, Righteousness is Truth. Christ is the Truth in whom, and by whom, God is just to show mercy to his people. Mercy and truth met in harmony in Christ crucified. God’s saints “walk in the Truth” when we walk by faith in Christ the Truth.

Galatians 2:19: For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

Christ is the Life because Christ is the Righteousness of his people. I have said often, “Sin is death; righteousness is life.” Paul declared that:

Romans 8:10: And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness.

So Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ.” First of all is because Christ is my Life. He is my life because he is my Righteousness.

Galatians 2:20: I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the 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.

Christ is the giver of eternal life. Christ is the sustainer of eternal life. Christ is the hope of eternal life. He prepared a place for all God's elect by his death at Calvary. So our Savior will come again and receive us to himself, to be with him, to be like him.

But in the context, when Paul said, "*For me to live is Christ*", he means Christ is the sum and substance of my life in this earth. He said, "*But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour.*" It was to continue preaching Christ. It was for Christ's glory and the good those Christ redeemed. Paul said, "*for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.*"

Not all God's saints are preachers. But all God's saints live for Christ. God's saints seek the things that be of Christ. This was Paul's heartbreak concerning those preachers in Asia that preached to add to Paul's affliction. He said,

Philippians 2: 21: For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

1 Cor 10:33 [Paul said to the Corinthians, I am]...not seeking mine own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

We live to promote Christ's glory, not our own. We live to bear witness of Christ to others—look for opportunities to declare the gospel to someone daily. We live to send forth the gospel of Christ to seek Christ's lost sheep and the good our brethren who Christ has already called to faith. God's saints live unto Christ. What is our constraint? What is our motivation?

2 Corinthians 5: 14: For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: 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.

That is what Paul is saying in our text, "For me to live is Christ." Before God's holy bar of judgment, the old man in all God's elect was crucified in Christ on the cross. The sin-nature is still in us. But that old man of sin was crucified under God's holy justice when Christ said, "It is finished." We arose in Christ forever righteous in and by our Substitute. So this is our constraint to live unto him.

Colossians 3:23: And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

AND TO DIE IS GAIN

To most death is a fearful thing. They have not the peace God gives when he makes us know we are accepted of God in the beloved. For any without Christ, death should be a fearful thing.

Others think death is the end. But physical death is not the end. After death is the judgment. If a man meets God without Christ's righteousness alone then he will face the second death. It will not be gain but great loss forever in hell.

But for those who believe on Christ and have no other righteousness but Christ, death is gain. Paul called it a "*departure.*" For the believer physical death is a departure from this world into God's presence to be with Christ forever.

For the believer, death means being with Christ. Notice, Paul does not say "*having a desire to depart, and to be in heaven.*" He says, "*having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.*" Christ is the believer's heaven. Christ makes heaven to be heaven for God's child.

For God's saints, physical death is to immediately be with Christ. The soul does not sleep in the grave. There is no purgatory.

2 Corinthians 5: 8: To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

For those made righteous in Christ, *“To die is gain...to be with Christ: which is far better.”* We will put off this natural body of sin and death with all its weakness and pain and be given a perfect body full of strength. We will put off this sinful nature with its sin and shame and fear. But then we shall be perfectly holy with no sin. We will no longer see through a glass darkly. We will have no more doubts. We shall know Christ as he knows us. We will have no more trials and trouble and sorrows and no more death. There are no cemeteries in heaven. We will have unbroken fellowship with Christ, perfect joy, perfect worship, forever with Christ our Redeemer and with our brethren.

So Paul said either way, I am Christ's and will worship and serve him—*“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*

Romans 14:7: For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. 8: For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. 9: For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

I SHALL NOT CHOOSE

Paul left the choice with God as to whether he would live or depart. Paul was in a straight between the two. He knew dying and being with the Lord would be far better for Paul. But he also knew that to remain in the flesh was more needful for God's saints.

Paul was like a wife who has her children at home with her but her husband is on the other side of the sea. She would gladly go be with her husband. Yet she's in a strait to leave her children. So Paul would gladly have been with Christ. But Paul knew the Philippians were his spiritual children and needed him.

So Paul said the choice is not mine to make. It is up to God's will. But knowing the need of his brethren in all the churches, Paul had confidence that the Lord would use him to preach the gospel a little while longer. He said, *“And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.”* God did open the way so that Paul went one more time and ministered to his beloved brethren at Philippi.

So let us pray for God's grace to submit to God's will. If it is the will of God for us to live longer or to depart, it is not ours to choose. It is up to God's will. He is wise and good, so whatever God's will be for us, it will be good. Let us ask the Lord for grace to live unto Christ while we are in this earth. Ask God for grace to serve Christ and to have more boldness to speak the gospel to perishing sinners. May everything we do be for the preeminent purpose of glorifying Christ, of sending forth the gospel for the calling out of the lost sheep who Christ redeemed and for the purpose of ministering to the needs of brethren. When it comes to living or dying, may God give us grace to submit with joy, knowing that either way we are Christ's forever.

Amen!