

“To live is Christ” (Joy for the Journey), Philippians 1:18-26, BCF 2013.2.3

[Title] **Joy for the Journey.** Where does lasting joy come from, or happiness? Recent articles: From “surround yourself with happy friends”, to “do good for others” ... to “take control of your life” or “treat yourself to a bubble bath” *Psychology Today* article: happy people are optimists, extroverts, etc. How to get there: “fake it”. If you act that way then you may have those emotions! (Totally behaviorist...)

Paul... imprisoned, chains, guard, supporting self, awaiting trial before Nero (not known for stability or justice... And yet he is surprisingly joyful in this letter...

Philippians 1:18-26 *Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.*

Stereotypes of Paul... he was negative, bigoted, patriarchal, woman-hating rabbi. Yet F. F. Bruce: “Apostle of the Heart Set Free.” Here a life purpose statement: **Philippians 1:21... “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”** And in a similar statement in **Gal 2:20... I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

Not just for him or missionaries or super-Christians, he says... **Colossians 3:3-4** *For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

Outline:

- a) what does this mean,
- b) why should we live this way,
- c) how do we get there?

1. What does this mean? “...to live is Christ...”

What this looked like for him: reliance on prayer and the ministry of the HS (19), hope and expectation in the Lord, courage to honor the Lord Jesus (20), fruitful labor (22), a strong desire to be with Christ (23), serving others for the progress and of their joy and faith (25), and that they might glorify (take pride, boast) in the Lord Jesus.

Three characteristics...

a) It is personal. It's more than duty and labor, or serving to advance a cause. To live IS Christ. (Illus. "life for me is soccer, or cello, or swimming, or grad school" ... it's more than an activity.) There's a Person at the center.

b) It is total. Jesus not a "is part of his life" or merely "in his life." Jesus IS his life. Christ is in him, and he is in Christ. Main self-identity, not apostle. Chap 3... everything good he had like manure compared to knowing Jesus. [Illus Mt 13, treasure, "in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."]

c) It's eternal. A win-win situation. He lives for Christ; if he dies, goes to be with Christ. His core identity & relationship will never fade, chip, crash or be destroyed. C. S. Lewis: "Do not let your happiness depend on something you may lose... only (upon) the Beloved who will never pass away." (From *The Four Loves*) This is the source of his joy.

Different phrases to describe this: "Christ being my All in All." "He's everything to me." Or consecration, dedication. "The Christ-centered life."

2. Why should we live this way? (*The Christ-centered life.*)

a) He deserves it. Who he is and what he's done-- He deserves such love and devotion. Phil 2 coming to us... "Every knee shall bow..." He is the best of all Beings, His grace deserves my gratitude! "for me to live is Christ..."

b) There is no other lasting source of meaning and joy. The one thing that can never be taken from us is our relationship with the Lord, and all that that gives. Again C. S. Lewis: "God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing." (From *Mere Christianity*)

There are many good things we can enjoy in life in the Lord. (DWhite: *ordo amoris.*) Our health and work and family. But when our kids grow up, will we be devastated? If spouse leaves, or dies, or fails us in some way, this will be grievous, but tragic? They can't be the source of ultimate joy.

c) My life is already his. Saw this in Col 3:2-4, my life and identity are already hidden in him. Christ in his death and resurrection delivered me from the suffocating prison of self-centeredness. In him I am loved, cared for, given a calling and purpose, and life. I'm really only free when he's at the center of my life.

3. How do we get there? (or back there?)

a) We need to realize we're not there. Dealing with sin and hindrances, blindness & unbelief. 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (Or, believe the gospel for the first time, or preach the gospel to yourself again.)

b) We should intentionally present ourselves to him. (Rom 12:1) *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*

c) We need the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (1:19) He is given to be our help, supply of power, and support. He is our Helper, strength-giver. Everything you and I need for life (to live well) is found in Jesus Christ, and becomes real (available) to us through the Holy Spirit in response to faith in his Word (promise). We need continual infilling of the Spirit ("be filled with the Spirit", Eph 5:18)

d) We need each other, and the support of their prayer. (1:19) We should pray for one another not just issues about health, travel, jobs (as important these are), but for their life in Christ, for the power of the Spirit in them, their joy in serving Christ, courage to stand, etc.

e) We need to keep seeking the Lord. Finished work of Christ not = stasis, cruise control. "Found Christ..." like marriage we need to keep seeking. Consider these verses...

[Slide] **Psalm 27:4, 8** One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.... You have said, "Seek my face." My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."

Jeremiah 29:13 "You will seek me and find me. When you seek me with all your heart, I will be found by you, declares the LORD."

Matthew 7:7-11 ...keep asking, seeking, knocking.

Ephesians 1:17 ¹⁷ [may] the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,... (See also Eph 3)

Hebrews 11:6 ...he rewards those who [keep] seek[ing] [*pres ptc*] him.

We need to seek *him*. We seek many things – safety, healing, provision, guidance, wisdom. "Seek me"... Ongoing.

It is his desire that he be to us our All in All. To be life to us. Danger: we treat the Lord as if we were in a loveless marriage and no longer pursue him. We are in relationship with an infinitely deep and beautiful Being, whom we are just beginning to know.

The lives of other Christians who have demonstrated this kind of life..

“I saw more clearly than ever that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord.” (George Muller, 19th century evangelist, founded many orphanages caring for thousands of children and their education)

“If I covet any place on earth but the dust at the foot of the Cross, then I know nothing of Calvary love.” (Amy Carmichael, “If”) (Missionary to India)

“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Phil 1:21)