

7/26/26

Christ Our Life
Phil. 1:22-26

Paul gave to the Philippians his missionary update and reasons why he would continue to rejoice and concluded that for him “to live is Christ and die is gain.” Phil. 1:21

* This is the key verse for chapter one, Christ our life!

Paul doesn’t focus on death as some escapism, but only as God's final dealing with us on earth in order to see Him face to face.

* As great as that would be Paul’s emphasis is on life here and now!

For Paul life and death were not opposites in Christ, but different stages of the believer, in Christ alive Jesus lived through Paul, dead in Christ Paul is present before Jesus, this is meaning of gain!

Paul has already clearly stated he is confident he will be released and does so again. Phil. 1:19, 25, 27; 2:24

Paul’s discussion is not about whether he is going to live but rather that he is not going to “live in the flesh, for the flesh”.

In principle, to die to self daily is far better than to live for self because Christ lives through us so that others can live!

The motive of Paul is love for Christ, that is the only power to enable any person to die on a daily basis, denying ourselves!

Paul therefore goes on to tell the Philippians what “to live in Christ” means to him. Phil. 1:22-26

- I.** To be an instrument of God. vs. 22
- II.** To be in a spiritual dilemma. vs. 23
- III.** To be investing in people. vs. 24-26

I. To “live is Christ” means to be an instrument of God. vs. 22

A. Paul identified the vehicle God uses, our physical bodies. vs. 22a

* “But if I live on in the flesh.”

- 1.** The statement is in contrast to death.
 - a.** The word but “de” is a contrasting conjunction, in the previous verse Paul described the two contrasts.
 - b.** Paul said, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” vs. 21
- 2.** The word flesh “sarx” can mean several things in Scripture.
 - a.** Sin nature that uses our body to sin in thought, words, deeds or actions.
 - b.** The physical body that is not sinful in itself, but a mere instrument or vessel.
 - c.** Natural ability in a positive light in and by our body.

3. The statement “to live on in the flesh” again indicates Paul’s physical body being used by God in this life.
 - a. To “live on”, Paul simply means to continue to live out life after his release.
 - b. To live on “in the flesh” again simply means in his physical body, which Christ would be magnified through, be it by life or death as he went before Nero. vs. 20
 * As long as we are alive in our physical bodies God desires to use each person. Rom. 12:1-2

- B.** Paul indicated the result of being allowed to live on in the flesh was to bear fruit for God. vs. 22b
 * “this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor.”
1. Paul in his use of the word fruit is **not** referring to his own personal development.
 - a. His personal growth, development and maturity in Christ.
 - b. The context is foreign to this interpretation.
 2. Paul in his use of the word fruit is referring to being used of God.
 - a. He saw himself as a branch joined to the vine Jesus.
 - 1) When we think of fruit, we mostly think of something that comes from a tree, bush or vine, such as oranges, lemons or grapes.

- 2) When we think of the process, we understand the fruit is the product of the tree and not of itself or the reverse.
 - 3) When we think of the source of the tree, we equally understand that nourishment comes from the soil, water and the sun, which are the original source of the fruit and a combined process with the tree.
- b.** He is saying he was a mere channel for Jesus.
- 1) The source Christ living through him.
 - 2) The apostle is the tree or instrument, the product of Christ himself.
 - 3) The fruit that comes through Paul as the instrument of God is fruit of the Spirit of Jesus in and through Paul.
 - a) Those who come to Christ through his preaching ministry of the gospel.
 * Paul was very aware that at time he planted at other times he watered but God gave the increase 1Cor. 3:7
 - b) Those who are instructed for nourishment, development and growth in Christ to maturity.
 * Jesus gives this principle in John’s gospel. Jn. 15:4-5,16
 - 4) Paul expressed his desire to have some fruit among the Romans when he arrived. Rom. 1:13

3. Paul by his use of the word fruit also implies God would reward him one day at the Bema-Seat of Christ. 1Cor. 3:12-14
 - a. Paul joins fruit with labor they go together.
 - * It is used consistently for the good works of God through the believer. Matt. 5:16; Eph. 2:10; 1Thess. 1:3; Tit. 3:14; 1Cor. 15:58
 - b. The word labor “ergon”, means the business, employment or the thing one is occupied in and exerting oneself by hand, industry or mind, in opposition to that which is less than work.
 - 1) The reward would involve that it was a genuine work of God, He directed it.
 - 2) The reward would also involve the motive of the heart agape love in the work of God. 1Cor. 4:5
 - 3) Paul used the same word for the labor of love the Philippians had sent him in a financial gift. Phil. 4:17
 - * Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.
 - c. This implies a personal recognition of what God has called him to do.
 - 1) This provides confidence in God.
 - 2) This makes a person accountable to God.
 - 3) This means a cost of time and commitment.

- C. Paul indicated without any hesitation the decision was not his, but God. vs. 22c
 - * “Yet what I shall choose I can not tell”.
 1. The phrase cannot tell “gnorizo” means to make known, reveal, declare or determine.
 - a. Lenski the Greek Scholar, “I am without cause of knowing.”
 - b. He says, “The thought is nothing has enabled Paul to know just what to prefer for himself, if he had the choice.” Lenski
 2. The apostle is saying some very important things regarding living for Christ and being used by him.
 - a. Paul is saying he could not declare or determine the choice.
 - * The Scriptures tell us that precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints. Ps. 116:15
 - b. Paul is saying it is for God to decide when life ends, it was not for him to declare or even reveal it.
 - * To the rich fool God said, “You fool, this night your soul will be required of you.” Lk. 12:20
 - c. Paul had already stated his confidence that he would be released. Phil. 1:19, 25; 2:24

Illustration

The Calgary Herald carried the following headline which attracted our attention: “Fishermen Just Watch as Youngster Drowns.”

The story is as follows. Nine year old Jimmy Wilkinson was playing with a pail when he fell into Lake Ontario-and “all people could do was stand around,” said Diane Reid, 15. “They could have saved him.” At the time about twenty men were fishing for smelt. “They had nets and everything else,” said Diane. “A man had a pole and poked around for a while. Then he went back to his fishing.”

Harbor police, who recovered the body six minutes after they arrived, said someone should have made the effort to help the boy. 11 But no one did. They just stood around and looked.” Prairie Overcomer- #2550

* Such is the case of some Christians who refuse to be used as God’s instrument as people are perishing eternally!

Application

1. Don’t ever underestimate the value of your involvement in the things of God as His instrument, every person fits in the body specifically. Rom. 12:1-2; 1Cor. 12; 1Pet. 4:10

- a. By one vote Oliver Cromwell won control of England.
- b. By one vote King Charles was beheaded.
- c. By one vote France changed from a Monarchy to a Republic.
- d. By one vote the Continental Congress during the American Revolution declared English to be

the official language for America instead of German.

- e. By one vote Hitler became Germany's leader.
2. We must come to grips with the reality that being an instrument of God will cost us by commitment and time resulting in fruit.
- * “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it. Lk. 14:28
- a. You will be a contributor, rather than a critic of the church.
 - b. You will see God work, rather than hearing that God worked.
 - c. You will be more Christ-centered, rather than self-centered.
 - d. You will have fewer regrets at the end of your life, rather than merely coming to the end of your life.
- * John the Baptist said, “I must decrease and He must increase.” Jn. 3:30
3. Let God decide when He will stop using you.
- a. Retirement from the Lord does not exist.
 - b. Realize that the older you are in Christ the more valuable you are to give out to others.
 - c. Recognize God will use your life to the very last second of life, if you allow Him to use you.
- * Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. 1Cor. 15:58

To “live is Christ” means to be an instrument of God to bear fruit!

II. To “live is Christ” means to be in a spiritual dilemma. vs. 23

A. The dilemma of Paul was between living to be used by God or dying to be present with Christ. vs. 23a

* “For I am hard pressed between the two.”

1. Paul describes this as, “For I am hard-pressed between the two”.
 - a. He refer to remaining alive in this world and death present with Christ. vs. 21
 - b. Hard pressed between “senechomai” means to hold together with constraint with equal tension.
 - 1) Tension keeps us balanced.
 - 2) Tension makes us strong.
 - c. The word is used of a traveler in a narrow path with a wall on each side unable to turn but only go straight.
2. Paul saw life and death not as opposites in Christ, but different stages of the believer in Christ, alive Christ lives through Paul, dead Paul is present with Christ, that is meaning of gain! vs. 21b

* Once again Paul by implication does not make that choice, God does!

B. The desire of Paul was to depart and be with Christ, if he had a choice. vs. 23b

* “having a desire to depart and be with Christ.”

1. The present reality is revealed by the word having “echon” is a participle present active.
 - a. This indicates the possibility of dying, as if it were a minor thing. Lenski
 - b. The reason it is a minor thing is that it was his own desire, not the will of God at this time.
2. The personal passion is indicated by the word desire “epithumia” means a strong attraction or impulse.
 - a. The word is used often in the New Testament for the strong cravings and lust for sin, in the negative.
 - b. The use of the word in our context is the positive regarding the personal benefit being with Christ instantly. 2Cor. 5:1-7
 - c. The apostle craved for heaven remember he had been caught up once before to the third heaven or Paradise. 2Cor. 12:1-5
 - 1) There he saw and heard things that were unspeakable.
 - 2) The place was where God dwells, the Father and the Son.
 - 3) The Lord allowed him to come back to life after being stoned at Lystra rather than remaining in heaven. Acts 14:19
 - 4) The apostle did not know whether he was an unembodied spirit or had a body.

5) The Lord gave him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble, lest he be exalted above measure.

* No wonder Paul wanted to be with Christ!

3. The experience of death for a believer is vividly described, “to depart and be with Christ.”
 - a. The word depart “analuo” is a euphemism for physical death and means to loose or untie.
 - b. The word comes from a military tent, “to strike camp”, taking a tent down.
 - c. The word is used of the unmooring of a ship taking up anchor.
 - d. The word is used by Paul when he was going to be put to death by Rome, “the time of my departure is at hand.” 2Tim. 4:6
 - 1) We are said to be pilgrims and sojourners on this earth. Heb. 11:13
 - 2) Our physical bodies are described as tents, temporal and fragile at best, in contrast to our eternal heavenly presence and glorified body. 2Cor. 5:1; 1Cor. 15:55-57; 1Thess. 4:16-17

C. The proclamation of departing and being with Christ is described. vs. 23c

* “*which* is far better.”

1. For whom would it be much better?

- a. The word which is in italics to indicate it is not in the Greek, but put for clarity.
 - b. For Paul it would be far better!
 - c. For the Philippians it would not be better, they would miss Paul.
2. Why would it be better for Paul?
 - a. Because Paul would be instantly present. 2Cor. 5:1-7
 - b. Because Paul would no longer have to battle the cravings of sin to fight or the imperfections of this flesh.
 - c. Because he would leave this present evil world influence that mares everything it touches and enter perfection and be just like Jesus. 1Jn. 3:2

Illustration

Remember that Philippi was a Roman colony, having all the privileges of Roman citizens yet they were not in Rome, so the Philippians were a colony of heaven with all the privileges, but I wasn't heaven!

* Much like a person who represents a government in a foreign land serving his country, yet not feeling quite at home, always longing and the craving of his homeland.

Application

1. The dilemma to depart and be with Christ is normal not abnormal, God's Spirit bearing witness that we belong to God, crying out Abba Father. Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6

2. The desire to depart should not be only when things are going wrong, as Elijah prayed that he might die when Jezebel promise to kill him. 1Kings 19:4

3. The desire to depart should not become a distraction to my service, God sent Elijah on his next mission to anoint Hazael and disciple Elisha. 1Kings 19

4. The desire to depart is a joyous one knowing you have fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith and that Christ alone will reward you. 2Tim. 4:6-8

5. Today many are deciding by suicide and euthanasia by assisted suicide, this is not in accord with the teaching of Scripture or of a Christian who is the instrument of God as a light to the world, you are not your own, you have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and Spirit! 1Cor. 6:19-20

* Five people committed suicide in the Bible, Saul, his armor-bearer, a Jewish king, Ahithophel and Judas! Christian history and Scripture deny Christian suicide!

To “live is Christ” means to be in a spiritual dilemma!

III. To “live is Christ” means to be investing in people. vs. 24-26

A. The apostle’s priority in life were people. vs. 24

* “Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.”

1. Paul declared despite what he knows to be better for him, he was not thinking of himself, but others.

a. He already told them that he did not care that people were attempting to add to his hurt by their preaching.

b. All he cared was that Christ was being preached and in that he rejoiced.

c. He in fact was giving evidence that he was putting on the mind of Christ, as he will ask them to do, others first. Phil. 2:3

2. Paul declared that “to remain in the flesh was more needful” for them that he remain.

a. The word flesh “sarx” again in this context means his earthly body. vs. 22a
* The word body “soma” was used also to indicate the physical body. vs. 20d

b. Paul was placing their needs above his own wants, the higher priority, indispensable and necessary.

c. Paul was willing to postpone heaven for a while for the benefit of the Philippians.

d. Paul in Romans he was willing to be accursed from Christ for the Jews. Rom. 9:3

e. Paul was not saying he could choose one or the other, only that he recognized that living would meet someone's needs.

f. Paul was revealing to the Philippians still ten years later, his shepherd's heart and

passion for God's people, that was were his heart was at.

* The letter reveals a lack of oneness rather than oneness. Phil. 1:16-17, 28; 2:1; 3:2; 4:2

B. The apostle's purpose was to help people grow spiritually. vs. 25

* "And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith."

1. Paul was assured of the purpose of God for this particular time in his life, that he would remain and continue with them all, "the more needful, rather than the far better".
 - a. He was confident in what he was telling them.
 - 1) The word confident "pepoithos" means to be persuaded, induce to believe.
 - 2) The word is used in the perfect participle which indicates Paul's confidence in the matter was one which resulted from the past action of turning the matter over to the Lord and it indicates he still maintained this confidence and joy. (Complete Biblical Library)
 - b. He was certain of the fact, "I know".

- 1) The word know "oida" means intuitive and settled conviction, the future indicative active tense
- 2) The phrase "and continue with you all" is in the indicate present active.
- 2) The apostle was in fellowship with the Lord on assignment.
- c. This could only come by and through the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit. Phil. 1:19
2. Paul's purpose was one with God's and was aliening himself with God's will, interested in their spiritual development in the faith.
 - a. The word progress "prokope" means to cut down.
 - 1) The word is the same word as the Greek word translated "furtherance" in verse twelve.
 - 2) The word is used of a military expedition to remove obstacles and cut down forest beforehand so that the army can follow.
 - 3) The apostle's confidence was that God would permit the more needful for the Philippians, rather than the better for himself.
 - b. The word faith has the article.
 - 1) The phrase is synonymous with the gospel.
 - 2) The faith is objective truth regarding spiritual truth about God, man, Satan, sin, love, holiness, etc.

- 3) The Scriptures describe various levels of maturity, little children, young men and fathers. 1Jn. 2:12-14
3. Paul purpose was that their progress in the faith should be accompanied by joy.
- Joy is a virtue of the Fruit of the Spirit, agape love.
 - Joy is not dependent on outward circumstances like personal happiness is.
 - Joy is mentioned throughout the letter and Paul is in prison on trial for his life, yet he is joyous for the work of the Spirit going on to save and mature Christians.
- C. The apostle's purpose was that people glory in Christ, not him. vs. 26
- * "that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.
- Paul is saying that their grounds for boasting should be Christ not the instrument Paul, "that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ."
 - The danger is always in boasting or gloring in the man, the vessel God is using for His glory.
 - We get impressed with man's ability to teach.
 - We get impressed with man's ability to minister to people.

- We get impressed with man's ability to preach the gospel and see people come to Christ.
- The word rejoicing "kauchema", means that of which one glories or can glory.
 - The word appears eleven times in the New Testament.
 - Four times it is translated rejoicing.
 - Three times "glory".
 - Two times "glorying".
 - One time boasting".
 - One time "rejoice".
- The boasting and gloring for Paul should always be tied to and related to Jesus.
 - The increment of glorying is to always be greater in Jesus, than Paul.
 - The phrase more abundant "perisseuo", simply means to exceed a fixed number of measure.
 - The Godman, the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ is the One who is to always exceed in ascribed glory, than any man.
- Paul is refers to when they would see him again, "by my coming to you again."
 - The word coming "pourosia", means presence or arrival.
 - The result of his release and coming to them would confirm he was in the will of God at Rome and further reveal how God was in control.

- 2) He had founded the church on his second missionary journey. Acts 16
- 3) He made a second journey to Philippi in A.D. 55-56 on his third missionary journey. Acts 20:1-6
- 4) He must have passed twice, first on his outward trip towards Corinth and then on his return at the time when he was on the way to Jerusalem. Acts 21
- 5) The date now is 60-61 A.D. Paul was released within a short time.
 - * The letter was written about ten years after Paul's first visit!
- b. The same word is used for the First, Second Coming and the Rapture. Matt. 24:27; 1Thess. 4:13
 - 1) Paul loved the Philippians and they love him.
 - 2) They could not wait to see Paul, not he them.
 - 3) This would be a joyful reunion to the glory of Jesus.
- c. Paul is saying that God will use people to bring glory to Himself.

Illustration

Remember the way you know you are a servant to people is when they treat you like one and it does not bother you.

* Paul said he becomes all things to all men that he might win some.

Application

- 1. How long do you think you have to live?
 - a. Are you using your time to benefit the body of Christ?
 - b. Are there things that you are doing that are not wrong in themselves, but they are not for priority living.
 - c. Do you take the time to fellowship with Jesus in the word?
 - 1) "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Eph 5:16
 - 2) "Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time." Col. 4:5
- 2. How many of your decisions are made in view of people's needs?
 - a. Are you the center of your life or is Christ?
 - b. If you are, then people are not first, except for when it is beneficial and convenient for you.
 - * Let each esteem others better than themselves and be their servants. Phil. 2:4-5
- 3. Have you ever helped someone grow in Christ by imparting what you have heard? 2Tim. 2:2
 - a. Teach a Sunday school class in the children's ministry.
 - b. Teach what you are learning to someone else.
 - c. Teach so people will grow spiritually, rather than your head!
 - * The purpose of the church is to perfect the saints. Eph. 4:11-12
- 4. Remember to always point people to Jesus and to glory in Him!

- a. Self glory is short lived!
- b. Selfless glory is not even noticed by the individual.
- c. Spirit glory is always directed to God!
 * “But to Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” 1Cor. 1:30-31

To “live is Christ” means to be investing in the benefit of people more than self!

Conclusion

For Paul “To live is Christ” meant three things.

- I. To be an instrument of God!
- II. To be in a spiritual dilemma!
- III. To be investing in people!