

# NETCAST SERMON NOTES

**Series:** This Isn't Normal

**Date:** May 10th, 2026

**Title:** To Live is Christ, but to Die is Gain

**Speaker:** Matt Chewning

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**Key Scripture:** Philippians 1:18–26; Galatians 2:20; Romans 14:8

## The Big Idea

When Christ is the organizing center of your life, your perspective on both life and death changes. Life becomes about "fruitful labor" and death becomes "gain" because it leads to the presence of Jesus.

## The Reality of the Cell

Paul wrote this letter from a Roman prison—a place of filth, starvation, and uncertainty. Roman judicial systems were swift; prisoners were usually executed or released quickly. Paul, however, had been held for over a year. Despite the brutal conditions, Paul wasn't asking for a rescue mission; he was rejoicing because the Gospel was spreading through the prison guards and other inmates.

## What You Worship Defines You

Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ." Whatever you put in the blank after "to live is..." will ultimately control you.

- If to live is money: You will never feel secure.
- If to live is image: Criticism will crush you.
- If to live is comfort: Suffering will unravel you.
- If to live is Christ: Nothing can destroy you. Jesus isn't just a part of Paul's schedule; He is the center of his existence.

## Death is Gain

For the believer, death is not a loss; it is a promotion. Paul describes himself as "hard-pressed" between staying on earth and departing to be with Christ.

- Relational Heaven: Notice that Paul doesn't focus on streets of gold or mansions. He focuses on being with Christ. Heaven is far better because it is the fulfillment of the soul's deepest longing: total presence with the Savior.

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## **Fruitful Labor**

Paul concludes that if he is to remain on earth, it is "more necessary" for the sake of the church. He views his life as a mission of "fruitful labor."

- **Saved to Serve:** Like a soldier rescued from a POW camp only to turn back and help others, Paul stays so that the church can have "progress and joy in the faith."
- **The Test of Peace:** If your peace depends on everything going right, that's not peace –that's control. Christian confidence is anchored in the certainty of Christ, not the certainty of circumstances.

## **Takeaway**

How would you honestly finish the sentence "To live is \_\_\_"? If your answer is anything other than Christ, how is that "blank" failing you when life gets hard?