

1

## ***For Me to Live is Christ to Die is Gain***

### **Philippians 1:21-26**

Paul pulled into the harbor at Neapolis & made his way to Philippi (Acts 16) one of the leading cities of Macedonia. The Holy Spirit had directed him by means of a night vision where a man of Macedonia was standing & praying, saying *come over here and help us*. So immediately he & Silas went. Macedonian call is idiom used for H.S. directed church plant or mission effort. *James illus Cherokee Iowa* At Philippi he & Silas stayed in the city, but on the Sabbath went to the riverside, figuring there'd be a worship service, since no synagogue (10 adult males). Women assembled, Lydia a worshiper was listening & Lord opened her heart-responded to gospel.

In city a woman possessed w/ spirit of divination followed '*These men bond servants Most High God proclaiming the way of salvation*'. After many days Paul cast demon out. Handlers stirred up mob & magistrates against Paul & Silas--beaten & thrown in inner prison. Praying & singing, earthquake, cells open chains fell off, jailer roused, attempts suicide, Paul preaches- '*what must I do to be saved? Believe in Jesus Christ*. He washed wounds, Paul washed w/ baptism. Released. **Now ten years later** Paul is writing to the church at Philippi, expanded from Lydia, demonized woman, Philippian jailer & family.

The book of Philippians is one of Paul's prison epistles/letters. He is awaiting trial before Caesar because of his faith. He could be executed. He is writing to thank the church for all their help in his hour of need. They were not ashamed of his chains but were avid supporters. The epistle emphasizes joy in times of trouble. Also, like any church there were **issues** to deal with, **problems** to resolve. A major concern was disunity among some of the members in the church.

***For Me to Live is Christ to Die is Gain***  
**Philippians 1:21-26**

Being of the same mind, in one accord & unity can only come through Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of people. So Paul repeatedly has us look to the example of Jesus in our dealings w/ each other. Get the right perspective, life is short, eternity is near so live for Jesus w/o regrets.

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

**22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.**

**23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;**

**24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.**

**25 And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.**

F.B. Meyer makes the point that if you take out *Christ* & *gain* from the verse, *For to me, to live is, and to die is* you realize how close life & death stand to each other. Just a coma separates life from death. Life is the porch to the house & death the door to enter our eternal home. After stepping from the short porch you enter your everlasting home. *For believers it's w/ Christ, non-believers outer darkness*

We come to realize how paper thin the separation between life & death really is. When a baby is born from that point on death races close at the heels of life until death overtakes it. **Pet**-German shepherd Stoney; **Turtle**-Willie; **Flower/Plant**-mother's day; **Friend**-dies. All of us stand at the coma in life & the next step is death.

Between the Dash—Partially true but I It's all summed up on gravestone in England w/ the inscription— *Pause, Stranger, when you pass me by, As you are now, so once was I. As I am now, so you will be So prepare for death and follow me.* Someone scribbled in chalk under it *"To follow you is not my intent Until I know which way you went!"*

## ***For Me to Live is Christ to Die is Gain***

### **Philippians 1:21-26**

For Paul the future held greater promise for him than the present. *'having the desire to depart and be w/ Christ, for that is very much better.'* Why would he say such a thing? Did Paul have a death wish? NO! Both life and death were sweet for Paul. In life there was Christ and in death more of Christ.

I've heard it said it is easier to die for Jesus than to live for Him. Dying may take minutes, living takes a lifetime. But in reality living for Jesus prepares us to die for Him if necessary. *For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.* If I fail to be a living witness what makes me think I will be a witness if called upon to die for Him.

***Jer 12:5 "If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?"*** (Jer is complaining about the abuse coming at him after preaching Gods word to his countrymen—he's thinking of quitting the ministry)

*At age 15 she was involved in witchcraft, very suicidal & anti-Christian. Her parents dragged her to the youth pastor's office for help. When she left, he commented 'Wow, she is a lost cause..' Her parents, youth group & youth pastor prayed for her. Then six mos. before she died she walked up to the youth pastor & said 'You'll never guess what I did today...I gave my life to Christ.' From that day on she was a radical evangelist at her school, her life was totally changed. So when asked by Eric & Dylan if she believed in God she stood up faced them & declared 'Yes I believe in Jesus and you need to follow His ways also...'. With a gun pointed in her face they opened fire & sent Cassie Bernall into the arms of Jesus. Eric Harris & Dylan Klebold committed the worst high school mass murder in history at Columbine High.*

In Cassies short life of 17 years *for her to live was Christ and to die gain*

If we took a census we'd likely find most people simply exist, some live, fewer live for Christ. If a person exists for 70-80 years and nothing significant is done for Christ, what is the point. Yet a short life, lived for Jesus still speaks to us. 'Soon this life will be passed and only what is done for Christ will last.'

## ***For Me to Live is Christ to Die is Gain***

### **Philippians 1:21-26**

***Ps 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His godly ones.*** Paul was eventually martyred for His faith.

In spite of all that Paul went thru for the gospel *'For to me to live is Christ...'*

As Paul got off the boat & made his way to Philippi, he encountered all types of people w/ all types of views on life. The harbor being on the primary trade route of Europe and Asia, he saw **merchants** w/ their goods, bartering, trading, making deals. They might say 'For me to live is business deals'.

For others the area of Macedonia had many gold & silver mines so those in the mining industry might say 'For me to live is gold & silver, wealth & riches'.

Still others the area was well known for it's exceptionally rich, fertile soil thus for those involved in agriculture 'For me to live is my crops, barns & bigger barns, success'.

For others waiting at port for a new ship to come in & take them to exotic lands "For me to live is travel, freedom, carefree living w/ lots of parties".

Still others, Philippi a Roman colony Augustus founded and named and populated w/ Italian discharged Antonian career soldiers 'For me to live is my career--my identity is tied to my chosen profession'.

Roman motto was *'might is right'* so for many in high positions 'For me to live is power, rule, top dog.'

Other's had a passion for an Adonis kind of body, perfect physical specimen, maybe they lived & trained for the Greek games--Olympics. 'For me to live is my body, my sport, my fill in the blank....surfing'. Give testimony

## ***For Me to Live is Christ to Die is Gain***

**Philippians 1:21-26**

Other's pagan gods were based on the mystery of reproductive system, giving it a god-like status, so temple prostitutes 'For me to live is sex'.

A large Greek element that was cultured & intellectual 'For me to live is knowledge'.

Epicurian culture was rampant in Roman society, pleasure sensations, food in mouth to judge pleasure it brought 'For me to live is pleasure principle'

Scriptures says *the one who lives for pleasure only is dead while they yet live. 1 Tim 5:6* **'People who are the living dead or dead men/women walking'**

The master passion of a person's life defines their god... 'For to me to live is...???' If we, like Paul can say 'For to me to live is Christ...' then our master passion is to be like Jesus, to do His will & accomplish His work. ***John 4:34 My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work. Jesus Work was to die for the sins of the world.*** If Christ **died** for us the least we can do is **live** for Him.

Jesus said ***John 6:38 'For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.*** The flesh at times didn't want to. *'If it be your will let this cup pass from me but not my will by thy will be done'*. God's will was for Jesus to go to the cross & Jesus did. We are only asked to **bear** the cross, He was **nailed** to the cross.

For a while WWJD was popular—what would Jesus do?—It became a fashion statement selling in secular venues—add balance, what wouldn't Jesus do? Crosses are fashionable, worn by pop stars & pagans as decoration—Madonna \* Marlyn Manson, etc. a calculated desecration--living life so contrary to the meaning of cross of Christ. Do you ever hear *'For to me to live is Christ..'* No!

## ***For Me to Live is Christ to Die is Gain***

**Philippians 1:21-26**

Even Judas was around Jesus, yet never did he utter 'For to me to live is Christ..' He was near the things of God but did not partake. He never calls Jesus Lord only rabbi and *'no one speaking by the Spirit of God says....'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 12:3*

Paul counted all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. In other words before the H.S. took over his life, he just existed. After, he stopped killing Christians, persecuting the church, separating families, putting innocent believers in jail. But it began with God working on Paul's heart for 3 days and 3 nights. He lived more life in that short period of time than all the years that had gone before--sorry for his sin, broken for his brutality, remorseful of his hypocrisy. It set the stage for the new life in Christ he was to live.

Three thrown in fiery furnace were really living while those bowing were just existing when Nebu built the golden idol. We know the tree the others not.

To die is gain not to **escape**—suffering—responsibility—temptations--not selfishly

Death itself is not gain but what it leads to is gain—Christ Himself. We see thru a glass dimly then face to face.

Until then fruitful labor--Jesus so possessed Paul is was no longer him that live but Jesus in him—His cross, what wouldn't Jesus do, put to death all contrary to Him. His yoke, what would Jesus do, to steer me toward His will for my life.