

To Live Is Christ. The Christ-Centred Life

Text: Phil 1:12-2

Suggested Hymns:

176, 380, 473, 292, 538

- 1) Is Dedicated To The Highest Ideals
- 2) Overcomes Life's Obstacles
- 3) Brings True And Lasting Joy

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Philippians 1:12-21, ¹² *But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,* ¹³ *so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;* ¹⁴ *and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

¹⁵ *Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will:* ¹⁶ *The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;* ¹⁷ *but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.* ¹⁸ *What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.*

¹⁹ *For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,* ²⁰ *according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.* ²¹ *For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Every intelligent person should ask and be able to answer the important question, ***“What is the purpose of my existing?”*** Why am I in this world? Is it merely to enjoy myself? to pamper myself? to become well informed, wealthy, and famous?

Furthermore, What are the motives in the back of my thoughts, words, and actions? Is it selfishness? greed? envy? or to get the applause of others? St. Paul expresses the Christian viewpoint, ***“For me to live is Christ.”*** Let us consider the Christ-centred life. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Christ-Centred Life Is Dedicated To The Highest Ideals

The statement ***“For me to live is Christ”*** implies a living faith in Jesus Christ. St. Paul stated his faith in Galatians 2:20, ***I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*** He explained, ***“This is a faithful saying, ... that Jesus Christ came ... to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”***¹

Every Christian believes Isaiah 53:4-5, ***‘Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*** In other words, “I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, ... also true man, ... has redeemed me” as expressed in the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed.

The statement ***For to me, to live is Christ*** also implies that our life is dedicated to “magnify” Christ. Our text says in verse 20, ***according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.***

We are to magnify Christ, that is, to make Him, His person and His work, known to as many people as we can. Jesus is not merely the helpless babe, the lost boy, the rejected Nazarene, the crucified malefactor, but “the only-begotten eternal Son of God” as we confess in the Nicene Creed.

Jesus Christ is the eternal Word which existed in the beginning. We read in John 1:3, ***³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*** And in 1 Corinthians 8:6, ***for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.***

Jesus directs every star, all nations, and upholds all things by the word of His power.² That Jesus Christ is the Ruler of all things is clear from 1 Timothy 6:15-16, *He ... is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords,¹⁶ who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.*

Napoleon wrote, “Everything in Christ astonishes me. His spirit over-awes me, and His will confounds me. His ideas and His sentiments, the truths which He announces, His manner of convincing, are not explained either by human observation or the nature of things.

His birth and the history of His life; the great depth of His doctrine, which grapples with the mightiest difficulties and which of those difficulties gives the most admirable solution; His Gospel; His appearance; His empire; His march across the ages and the realms, — everything is for me a marvellous wonder, a mystery insoluble, which plunges me into thoughts from which I cannot escape, — a mystery which is there before my eyes, a mystery which I can neither deny nor explain.

Here I see nothing human. The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine. Everything is above me. Everything remains grand, — of a grandeur which overpowers. His religion is a revelation from an Intelligence which certainly is not that of man.”

Our entire life, days of joy and sorrow, are evidence that Christ as King rules for the spiritual welfare of His children. We read in Ephesians 1:21-23 that God the Father placed Jesus²¹ *far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.*²² *And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,*²³ *which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

Jesus over-rules everything for the purpose that His redemptive work may be manifest in us. We live only that Christ as our Redeemer-King is magnified.

Furthermore, such a life is consecrated to *“the furtherance of the Gospel,”* as verse 12 tells us. Listen to the verses in our text talking about spreading the Gospel. Verse 14, *and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.*

Verse 15-18, *Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: ¹⁶ The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷ but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.* “Preach Christ,” “preach Christ,” “every way ... Christ is preached.”

That was not merely the special life work of the Apostle Paul, but that is the one purpose for which every Christian, for which this world, exists. The present need is great. Consider the many criminals in Australia actually at work stealing and murdering. Consider the many millions of unchurched; and the false-teaching that abounds in many churches. The hopeless world needs personal evangelism.

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel” Scripture says in Mark 16:15. We are told in 1 Peter 2:9, ⁹ *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.* Then in 1 Peter 3:15 we are told to *always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.*

Matthew 24:14 tells us that *this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.*

2. The Christ-Centred Life Overcomes Life’s Obstacles

Listen to the obstacles St. Paul overcame. He was persecuted and afflicted by both his enemies and by his “brethren.” In verse 12 Paul refers to *the things which happened to me.* “My Chains,” in verses 13 and 14; and “*envy and strife,*” in verse 15.

Think of his arrest at Jerusalem, the mob trying to lynch him, imprisonment at Caesarea, his voyage to Rome, the shipwreck, and later Roman imprisonment.³

Yet St. Paul did not permit these apparently insurmountable hindrances to get him down. To the end of time the Church will treasure, and be inspired by, his prison letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Our text says *the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. ... it [my chains are in Christ] has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest ... and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.* Through Paul's suffering other people also became bold to proclaim the Gospel to everyone else.

If we live like this for Christ, if our objective in life actually is Christ, then there will be no difficulties that can discourage us. Our handicaps, "I am too bashful to confess Christ"; "I lack the understanding of Bible language"; "I don't want to make enemies"; "I am too poor"; or "I am always broke," will prove imaginary.

2 Corinthians 5:14 makes it clear that *the love of Christ compels us.* In other words the love of Christ moves us into action. Scripture says in Philippians 4:13, ¹³ *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* and that includes proclaiming the Gospel.

St. Paul said, *"I have been crucified with Christ ... the life which I now live ... I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."*⁴

3. The Christ-Centred Life Brings True And Lasting Joy

Such a life is one of rejoicing no matter how dark the hour. Our text says, *I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.* Listen to the joy that Paul has. We read in Philippians 1:3-4, ³ *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,* ⁴ *always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy. ... Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*⁵ *... I am glad and rejoice with you all.* ¹⁸ *For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.*⁶ *... Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*⁷

¹ *Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. ... help ... the rest of my fellow workers, whose*

*names are in the Book of Life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*⁸

²⁵ But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.⁹ And in 2 Corinthians 12:10, ¹⁰ *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

There is a life of rejoicing awaiting us if we only walk under the flag of our Master, bear His banner forward to victory, snatch immortal souls as brands from the fire, and celebrate new conquests and victories.

Looking at St. Paul "We step into a prison; we see a man chained to his guard. Ours is a natural feeling of gloom and sadness. ... We go about and talk with the Christians in Rome; we find a divided sentiment; some dislike and envy St. Paul. Again we feel depressed and sad. ... We talk with the guard who has St. Paul in charge; We learn that, however favourable the outlook is at present, there is still danger that St. Paul may be condemned. Again we feel discouraged and sad.

But let us talk to St. Paul himself. Here we have his words: not a trace of discouragement, sadness, or gloom; his heart overflows with joy, confidence, and hope."¹⁰

Living for Christ, all things must work together for our good. Our text says, *For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed.* We read in Romans 8:28 that *we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Paul prays in Ephesians 6:19 *that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.* Then the supply of the Holy Spirit is promised, as we read in Matthew 10:19-20, *do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak;* ²⁰ *"for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.* Then in Luke 12:12 we read, ¹² *"For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."*

Our text concludes with the words, *and to die is gain*. To die is never a gain for the unbeliever, no matter how hard his lot and what horrors he suffers on earth.

On the other hand the most joyful life of the believer cannot compare with the glory that shall be revealed to him in heaven. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ 1 Tim. 1:15

² Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2

³ Acts 26:31, 32; Eph. 3:1; 2 Cor. 11:23-25

⁴ Gal. 2:20

⁵ Philippians 2:2

⁶ Philippians 2:17-18

⁷ Philippians 3:1

⁸ Philippians 4:1-4

⁹ Acts 16:25

¹⁰ R.C.H. Lenski