

“TO LIVE IS CHRIST, TO DIE IS GAIN”

PHILIPPIANS 1:18-26

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Theme of Sermon: As Christians we must learn not merely to live for Christ, but to realize that **Christ is our life**.

If we have Christ, we have everything we need and we can lose nothing. Even death will be our gain, not a loss. Having the mindset “Christ is my life” will help us to make progress in our faith and grow in our joy (Phil. 1:25).

You cannot really study and understand this passage of the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Philippians without breaking out in joy- -REJOICE! REJOICE! REJOICE!

“TO LIVE IS CHRIST...” (v. 21a) - *Seeking Jesus with all your heart.*

- What does it mean not merely to live **for Christ**, but that your life **is Christ**?

Don’t merely live for Christ, but realize that Christ is your life.

Not merely living for Jesus, but Jesus is what defines us!

Paul is imprisoned, in chains for Christ and His Kingdom.

Yet the Gospel is advancing- -many are being en-**couraged**- -the Gospel is advancing and the brethren are boldly preaching without fear the good news of Jesus Christ as a Savior from sin.

Paul can rejoice because He knows that whatever happens to him, he interprets the circumstances from God’s perspective and He knows that what may seem like “hindrances become by God’s grace high-speed highways for the advancement of the Gospel.”

The Apostle Paul can rejoice because he knows God’s power is made perfect in weakness.

Do you know that?

He can also rejoice because for him “to live—Christ” (v. 21).

For Paul, to live *is Christ*.

Paul has nothing to lose- -HE HAS EVERYTHING IN JESUS.

Whatever place he finds himself, it is for Jesus; it is with Jesus; it is in Jesus!

Nothing to lose and everything to gain! (v. 21) - -REJOICE!!

Paul lives his life in a moment-by-moment “win-win” situation; there are not good times and bad times- -every moment is a good moment where Christ can enter in by virtue of Paul’s real and Holy-Spiritual union with Him and be transformed- -made more like him- -and to become more and more fruitful as he progresses in his faith.

What is the difference between *chronos* time and *kairos* time?

Do you think on each moment on the love, beauty, glory, grace, and compassion of Jesus toward you?

This is the key to true rejoicing. This is what makes a person truly joyful- -CHRIST. In many ways, CHRIST IS JOY.

JOY (like love that is revealed in 1 Corinthians 13) is personified in Jesus. We have Jesus; to live, Jesus; we have joy in Jesus.

Do you have this kind of ability to rejoice?

What does it mean “To live- -Christ”?

In Greek (v. 21) is TO ZEN – CHRISTUS/ TO APOTHANEIN –KERDOS

Literally: “To love—Christ. To die- -Gain.”

Rhetorical power without a being verb.

“The foundation, center, purpose, direction, power and meaning of Paul’s life is Christ” (see Hansen, PNTC, *Philippians*).

For the Apostle Paul, “to live is Christ” is THEOLOGICAL and very PRACTICAL.

THEOLOGICALLY Paul is in union with Jesus Christ.

Union with Christ:

“The central soteriological reality is union with the exalted Christ by Spirit-created faith. That is the nub, the essence, of the way or order of salvation for Paul.” -Richard B. Gaffin, By Faith, Not By Sight: Paul and the Order of Salvation

Paul is: “Buried with Christ” (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12); “United with Christ” (Rom. 6:5); “Crucified with Christ” (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20); “Alive with Christ” (Rom. 6:7); “Heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17); “Suffers with Christ” (Rom. 8:17); “Glorified with Christ” (Rom. 8:17); “Have the same form as Christ- -be like him” (Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:21); “Be conformed with Christ” in every way: life, death, and resurrection (Phil. 3:10ff).

PRACTICALLY (theology lived out), Paul knows that Christ is the most important person, thing, possession and reality in his life. Period. All of Paul’s “meaning of life” or what it means to live for Paul is about Christ.

Paul cannot fathom a life that is truly a life being without Jesus Christ.

CHRIST IS HIS LIFE. The BIG Questions of life:

“Who am I?” I was created for Christ

“What is my purpose?” Christ

“Why am I here?” Christ

Paul’s mind, affections, and will are filled and directed by Christ; Jesus defines Paul.

- What defines you? What brings you the greatest joy? Honestly. Getting at what brings you the greatest joy (which is often just happiness that changes with circumstances, but what is it that makes you happy most of the time), will help you to know what defines your life.

What is your heart’s greatest longing?

What’s most important to you? Right now.

What is your most important goal?

What could you never live without?

What fills your daydreams and captures your imagination?

What possesses you? (We often says what “possesses that person to do that?!”)

What is your most valuable asset? What is most precious and “worthy” to you?

Does Jesus bring you the greatest joy? When you say the name JESUS does your heart beat harder within you? Do you sense his presence and think of His goodness towards you?

Can you say with the Psalmist:

^{ESV} **Psalm 16:2** I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; **I have no good apart from you.**"

^{ESV} **Psalm 73:25-26:** Whom have I in heaven but you? **And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.** ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and **my portion forever.**

Do you believe this?

Is this obvious in your life that you believe this? How about to your family? Can your friends and neighbors see that what brings you the greatest joy is to live- - CHRIST!?

Notice the **IMPRISONED APOSTLE PAUL’ AFFECTIONS- -his longings, his desires, his attitude, his love in this passage** (1:19-26): “Great expectations” (v. 20- “eager expectation”); “rejoicing” (vv. 18-19); hope beyond belief- -hope beyond this world; Paul longs for heaven (v. 23).

Would these same dreams and imaginations describe you? Do you have these kind of affections?

How can you and I have this joy? We must fill our affections by God’s grace with the love of Jesus. We must be able not merely to live for Jesus, but to find that Jesus is our life- -all that we ever need now- -or will ever need.

To get Jesus is more precious than to have all the money and possessions and approval in this world!

What do you long for the most? What causes you most to rejoice now? This will help you to find what matters most to you. “To live is _____.”

Is it Christ Jesus who died for you?

“Let your soul be filled with a heart-ravishing sense of the sweetness and excellency of Christ and all that is in Him. Let the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of your heart; and so there will be no room for folly, or the world, or Satan, or the flesh.” - Robert Murray M’Cheyne.

Christ Jesus is the chief end of our lives. We are to glorify and enjoy God forever. We can only do this when Christ Jesus is the chief end, aim, and/or hope of our lives.

- How can the Apostle Paul be truly rejoicing in his imprisoned predicament?

As we considered in our last sermon, Paul could have easily pitched a big pity-party fit and complained about the prison food, the “unfair treatment” etc.

He could have said: “Doesn’t God care? Doesn’t he see all the good I’ve done for him? How dare God treat me like this in return!!”

But he doesn’t because Paul lives not only for Christ but **Christ is His life.**

We talk in our popular language that “I live for this and that” (much weightier to say “I live for this and/or that” than “I love this and/or that): “I live to play golf” (not merely I love to play golf; you can eat to live or live to eat; you can love to eat or live to eat, get it? One more: you can play to live or live to play, or love to play, etc).

We say also: “I live for my family”; “I live for affection and attention from others” (some we don’t say as loudly as other things ☺); “I live for vacation or the weekend” etc.

Whatever your confession, what you live for is what you most “glory in” or “value” as being **best**- -what is most worthy of your time, money, and investment of energy.

What you value most is what you long for- -you hope for- -what your affections are set on and what you dream about.

Some live for **self**. “To live is Me”

Some live for **pleasure**. “To live is joy, happiness, peace and escape.”

Some live for **money**. “To live is possessing more so that I am secure.”

Some live for **family**. “To live is my family.”

Some live for **career**. “To live my career; what I do most defines me.”

Some live for **ministry** for **religion**. “To live is my performance for God, my reputations of what I am doing in my service.”

What do you ultimately prize?

Could what is most important to you ever be taken away?

Where is your hope?

What do you spend most of your time pursuing?

What do you spend your quite moments daydreaming about?

What do you long for?

Where do you “put” your money?

What you value most will be what you glory in, ‘**LIVE FOR**’, and from that (or those things) you will derive your joy, hope, peace, happiness, etc.

“What truly makes you tick?”

What could you never live without?

But all these things we live for other than Christ, we can, and will one day lose them.

How do you know if you are functionally living for something or someone other than Christ?

You lose your joy in circumstances!

“What indicator lights might help me?” you ask. “What signs can I see in my own life and emotions and behavior that will tell me I’m slipping into living for something or someone other than Christ as my greatest end?”

Opposite emotions to joy:

Anxiety
Fear
Despair
Depression

Christ is your life:

Despair → Hope

Complaining → Rejoicing

Negative thoughts about life and others → Expectant prayer for them
(Phil. 1:19)

Depression, gloom, “just getting by” → Courage, great expectations,
fulfilled longings, glory, all you could ever dream about coming true.

JESUS.

***If we have set our affections upon other things too much, even good things- -
then we will find our joy going up and down like a roller-coaster.***

We will not be able to stay in the moment and rejoice.

If the Apostle Paul's thing he lived for was the joy of freedom in ministry, he
wouldn't have been able to rejoice; if the Apostle Paul lived for doing things his
way and staying in control of his schedule, he wouldn't have been able to rejoice.

Neither can we rejoice if Christ is not our life!

We can never lose Christ!

Career, family, loved ones, friends, our ministry for Jesus- -all are good and
important things, but they must not be more important to us than Christ; they must
not define us! (see Luke 14:26-27).

It's one thing to be devastated over the loss of a loved one or friend and find
comfort in Jesus; it's another thing altogether to be devastated by a loss because
that was your greatest thing; you just lost what meant the most to you; you just
lost a loved family member; you just lost a career opportunity; you just lost
money; you just lost your spouse; you just lost WHAT YOU LIVED FOR!

***If you lose what you live for, you will no longer be able to live,
because you'll no longer want to live.***

For Paul, and for all believers, if Christ our life, our all, then we have nothing
EVER to worry about losing!

That which is most worthy, glorious and valuable to us is JESUS and we cannot
lose Him.

And whatever loss we are going through, with Jesus, in union with Jesus, we can rejoice even more knowing this truth- -HE IS WITH US- -AND WHILE OTHERS LOSE EVERYTHING, WE CAN ONLY GAIN MORE OF HIM 'IN IT'!!

No true joy is possible UNLESS JESUS CHRIST is everything (as the hymn we sing reminds us):

“When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride...

...Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ my God: all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood...

...Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

We will never be able to rejoice always like the Apostle Paul (see also Phil. 4:4ff) until we know what it means “to live is Christ” or “To live—CHRIST!”

Jesus Christ must be our life! Jesus must be dearer to us than our richest gain; Jesus Christ must be more dear to us than our jobs, our careers, our families, friends, reputations, finances, homes...

If we have this, we can lose NO thing- -nothing.

If we have Jesus as our life, we can lose nothing; if we have not Jesus as our life we will lose everything.

How do we get this kind of joy?

This is not perfectionism (Paul had not attained this, Phil. 3:7ff); this is not advanced Christianity (Paul wants us to imitate him, Phil. 3:17, 4:9).

All Christians can have this kind of joy! THUS SAYS THE LORD!

How do we get true and lasting joy in Jesus daily?

- 1) We were created to commune and converse with Jesus Christ- -to embrace and behold his beauty and holiness and to be like him- -let us seek it prayerfully together as a congregation.

- 2) Let us understand our union with Jesus better; we were crucified and died and buried with Christ; we were raised; our lives are hidden with Christ in God (Christ is our life, Colossians 3:1-4).
- 3) Let us understand God's love for us more and more; and our love for one another (Phil. 1:9-11).
- 4) Christ gave his life for us, so that we would give our lives for him (read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15).

What is true joy in Jesus? Joy is progress in the Christian life (Phil. 1:25)

- Joy is a God-given grace in response to our need for communion and fellowship with him; it is NOT happiness that passes with circumstances.
- Joy cannot be bought; it can never be taken away.
- Joy is found in the Person of Jesus Christ; Joy in many ways *is a Person*.
- Joy is found in seeking Christ—knowing Christ. My prayer for our congregation here at KCPC is often from Ephesians 3:19:

ESV **Ephesians 3:19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

“TO LIVE IS CHRIST”

CHRIST IS THE CHIEF END OF OUR LIVES.

If we don't have Jesus, we will be defined by other people, other stuff, our own small dreams, and we will seek something else to fill the holes that can only be filled by Jesus Christ!

And we will not find joy.

TO LIVE IS CHRIST.

To say this is to say:

“Christ is my **hope**.”

Christ is my **greatest treasure and pleasure**.”

Christ is my **greatest friend**.”

Christ is **my end, my goal.**

Christ Jesus is the one thing, the one person I can never lose; Christ is my richest gain- -and I can never lose him. He is with me always...I will never leave you nor forsake you!

This is what is meant by TO LIVE IS CHRIST.

But oh so much more!

Our lives will be fruitful. Paul says in v. 22:

“If I am to live in the flesh (body), that means fruitful labor for me...” (1:22).

JOY

Paul knows that if he abides in Christ; if Christ is his all, he will bear much fruit-fruit that will last!

- Read Philippians 1:19. What hope does the Apostle Paul place on the prayers of God’s people? What does this teach you about the importance of prayers for one another at KCPC, and our dependence upon one another?

“To live is Christ” means prayerful dependence, Spirit-filled power (v. 19). Christ will be honored in our bodies (v.21), and that we will have fruitful labor, progress and joy in our faith by His grace (vv. 22, 25).

Here is the believers’ hope- -let us all confess this to one another as often as we have the opportunity!

ESV Psalm 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

In God’s presence is fullness of joy!

At God’s right hand is the Glorified, Enthroned Savior and Lord of All! There in Him, we will find all the pleasures we have ever desired or wanted- -or knew we could want!

If we have Christ, what can we lose?

Even in death- -we do not lose! (As we will see next week in our sermon, Lord willing).

We have already been dying daily in Christ—and so we have died so many times that when this “flesh and heart fail”- -we still say:

“The LORD is the strength of my heart and my portion forever!” (Psalm 73:25ff).

We cannot lose our life in death- -we are transformed in death into Jesus’ glorious image.

How could we as believers NOT see Jesus as the very life-power of our day to day pursuits?

How could we as believers NOT have what is most important to God most important to us!

How could we as believers NOT make Christ’s goals our goals; Christ life our life; Christ’s beauty our beauty?

Let us learn to pray for one another for the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ to fill us and that we might be overflowing with God’s joy and hope in Him! Let us pray to know Christ better- -his love, his work for us, his priestly intercession, his sufferings for and with us- -and to know Christ more intimately, closely, adoringly, affectionately. Let us at KCPC come to Christ more and by your grace, O Father, let us leave with more of Christ. Grant that we might be a congregation characterized by “TO LIVE IS CHRIST.” For Christ’s sake and His glory alone! Amen.

CRB