

WORD OF TRUTH

Vol. 5

Issue 1

TO LIVE IS CHRIST, TO DIE IS GAIN

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Are these Holy Spirit inspired words of the Apostle Paul, stating his personal relationship with Jesus Christ, my words also? Are they yours? Paul was not stating these words to brag, nor was he confining their effect to only himself. These words should be heartfelt and part of every believer's life. It should be our "life verse". I have always said that my life verse is "**He must increase, but I must decrease**" (**John 3:30**). Even that one is hard to live day by day. Being creatures of flesh, all of us are probably more prone to live as in the following phrase: "*To me to live is to be successful, and to die is having to reluctantly leave it all behind.*" That's awful, I know, but that is the lifestyle of so many, even professing Christians.

Of course, to the lost world, living in Christ, walking in Christ, witnessing for Christ are all things that a *madman* does. Christ is *dead*, don't you know? He has been for nearly 2000 years, or so these blinded rebels say. What they are *not* seeing is that, yes, He died, but He is risen!

What made Paul different is that he met the resurrected Christ on the Damascus road, and thereafter he was never the same as before. He was a persecutor of the church, but now is a proclaimer of the gospel of the Christ that he once persecuted. Yes, even today he is still proclaiming the gospel through his inspired writings.

We are not even looking at this time at the second part of this verse. That talks about dying. No one wants to do that. Understandably so, for God so designed us with survival instincts, yet Paul says for him, to die is gain. We will examine that later. For now, focus on the *living* part. Is Christ so in us and our lives that we can say with Paul "To me to live is Christ"? That is a tall order. *We cannot do it*. In ourselves, at least, we cannot do it. The Holy Spirit (who is the Spirit of Christ), must be so in control of us that we do not live our own lives, as such, but "Christ liveth in me". (See Galatians 2:20). In reality, we must also meet the resurrected Christ as Paul did on that Damascus road long ago.

Our verse is perhaps the *key* verse of Philippians, and one of the most important in the Bible. Am I, are you, living it in application? I confess that I am not fully doing it, but I sincerely want to do so. I am striving against sin daily. I am looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith. Yet, I still fall short of the glory of God. I am not giving up, and with God as my helper, I am going to reach that place where I can say with Paul "For to me to live is Christ". How about you?

We may say we are living our lives in Christ, and sincerely mean it. But, do those who are nearest to us in everyday life on our jobs; in our homes; in the marketplace; see this in us, that we are

living out Christ in our lives? May God help us! Here we all fall short. Yet, I believe Paul was indeed living a life controlled by Christ. A life guided by the living Christ. A life exemplifying Christ. Every desire of his life was to be Christ like. To be used by Christ. To be tortured, if necessary, for Christ; and to even die for Him.

That brings us to the latter part of the verse “to die is gain.” Unregenerate men can’t say this. Ordinary men don’t say this! Paul was not ordinary in this sense: As Paul said in the latter part of 1 Corinthians 15:31 **“I die daily”**. *The Amplified Bible* gives this expanded reading “*[I face death every day and die to self]*”. Certainly this man did that--fearlessly! When He said “to die is gain”, he was saying “Whatever happens, you cannot destroy me, for I will be with the Lord”. I am reminded of what the late Haralan Popov said so often, “*If a man is not afraid to die, you cannot hurt him, do what you will*”. He said that when the communists were brutally torturing him in his native Bulgaria. I heard him express this many times when I traveled with him.

In the following verses Paul makes it clear that although he would prefer to go ahead and be with Christ, he knew the necessity of abiding here in this life for now. He knew that he had a mission to perform for Christ before God would take him home. As he said **“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you”**(*Philippians 1:23,24*). When Paul wrote this letter, he was under Roman imprisonment, not certain that he would live to see the Philippian church again.

He knew that “to die is gain”, as it is for all Christians, for after death for us we will awaken in Christ’s presence. **“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”** (*2 Corinthians 5:6-8*).

Paul had said in the latter part of verse 20 **“With all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death”** (*Philippians 1:20b*). The apostle’s ultimate goal was to magnify Christ (Greek *megaluno*= *to declare, or show great; to extol Him*), whether by living for Him, or dying for Him. So Paul lived what he preached and wrote. Regarding himself, he was truthful when he said **“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”** (*1 Corinthians 6:20*). So if the Father *wrought* our salvation; the Son *bought* our salvation; and the Holy Ghost *sought* us for salvation, we ought to be more able each day we live so say with Paul **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”** O great God, help us to live like that, with our eyes always on our strength and our redeemer, Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God. Amen.

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