

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Lord's Day Morning

Date 15th January 2023

Preacher Rev Philip Knowles Ps/Hymns Ps 34v1-10 Antioch, 263, 195, 526

Read: Philippians 1:20-26 Text Philippians 1:22

Series: Philippians (33) Title : Comparing living with Christ on Earth, or With Christ Heaven (1)

The words of **Philippians 1:22-26** actually flow out of **verse 21**. Paul states **for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain**.

For Paul these were wonderful thoughts because both living and dying with regards to the Christian life centred upon Jesus Christ.

Remember, Paul was bound in a Roman cell for preaching the gospel.

However, he turns his prison cell into a pulpit, the place of waiting becomes a place of witnessing.

Paul uses his prison experience, to write his prison letters.

The letter to the believers at Philippi is one of those prison letters.

Paul writes to encourage Christians, that the things which have happened unto him have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.

Paul is bound in prison, but the word of God has free course and was being glorified.

Among the many who visited Paul, some turned to faith in Christ alone.

Paul himself was under a death sentence, yet he continues to serve Christ.

Paul did not let his situation get the better of him or rob him of rejoicing in the Lord.

Therefore, in these verses Paul encourages Himself in the Lord his God, by having a discussion with himself.

His thoughts are put into writing.

He is thinking out loud, comparing life and death, if I live on earth, it's to live Christ and for Christ, and when I die I go to be with Christ. I don't lose out

Paul understood his times are in the Lord's hands. The day of Paul's death was appointed by God not man.

However, from a human point of view, Paul does not know how long God has determined his days,

but what Paul does know is this, whatever time God gives him on earth, he will serve Him, but if it's His divine time to call Paul home, he's ready to die and be with Him.

Paul is comparing living with Christ on Earth, or with Christ in Heaven

I want to consider Paul's Deed, Paul's Desire and Paul's Discernment, but for today please look with me at:

I FIRST PAUL'S DEED.

when Paul was saved by the grace of God, Paul began to pray and ask the Lord what wilt thou have me to do?

Paul testifies in **Acts 9, 22, 26** that God called him to serve in gospel ministry, to make Christ known to sinners and feed the church purchased by precious blood.

Paul's life was given over to Christ, he presented his life a living sacrifice to God as his reasonable service, therefore, his deeds, his activity, his only purpose for living was Christ.

It was Christ in His glorious person and gospel ministry that drove Paul forward.

Until Christ called Paul home, Paul would continue to serve Him on earth.

Connect the words from **verse 21-22** "**for to me to live is Christ and die is gain, but if I live in the flesh this is the fruit of my labour...**"

Paul's deed was seen by living for Christ in the flesh.

Now often, in Scripture when we read phrases, such as **the flesh, live in the flesh**, it indicates deeds in the flesh, and in most cases refers to sinful living, that which is to be avoided.

For example, Paul in writing to the churches at Galatia, compares the deeds of living in the Spirit and Flesh, walking in the Spirit or flesh.

He uses the phrase in **Galatians 5:17** ***the works of the flesh***, then lists sins to be avoided and conquered by the power of the Spirit.

Also, In **Romans 8:5**, Paul talks about those who are ***after the flesh, mind the things of the flesh and those after the spirit the things of spirit.***

Usually the language, refers to the strong desires of the flesh to sin and worldly pleasure, contrasting worldly living in the flesh with the holy living in the Spirit.

But there are also times when Paul refers to the word **flesh**, to mean **physical frame, the body, existence.**

As when He said in **Galatians 2:20** *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

2 Corinthians 7:5 *“for when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had not rest...”*

*This is how the phrase, **if I live in the flesh** is used in **Philippians 1:22**, Paul is referring to his life, his physical existence. He lives for Christ and serves Christ in his body.*

*(his body has been through much according to **2 Corinthians 11:33-37** were he list's his trials, and now chained in prison. Paul said in **Galatians 6:18** *“I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”*)*

So in **Philippians 1:22**, when Paul speaks about living in the flesh, he is not talking about living in sin, but rather living his physical existence and life.

Since to live is Christ, then Paul wants his life, flesh, body to magnify, to lift up Christ's Righteous person and Redemptive ministry.

Paul desired his life to count for Christ. Paul lived for the praise and honour of God.

Paul learned from the Saviour, whose purpose was to live for God, He said in **John 6:38-39** ³⁸ *For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me.*

³⁹ *And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

Believer we have only one life to live, and living that life is Christ.

Is your all on the on the altar of sacrifice, surrender all to live Christ and for Christ in all places and in the ministry of south grove FPC.

Paul's deed was seen by labouring for Christ in the flesh.

Once again, Connect the words from **verses 21-22** "***for to me to live is Christ and die is gain, but if I live in the flesh this is the fruit of my labour...***"

Living and labouring for Christ according to Paul is the same thing.

When Paul lives, its Christ, for Christ, unto Christ, because of Christ, and when Paul labours it's Christ, for Christ, unto Christ because of Christ.

The word **labour** means **deed, work, employment.**

The idea is activity, to do something. Paul works for Christ, giving his body, his energy for the master's use.

Paul wants to spend his last days as he has always done, labouring, working, being active for the master.

Notice Paul said ***the fruit of my labour...***", God had a work for Paul to do. Paul said it's my work, my labour but not for myself but for Christ.

He realises that there is a life of service to be involved in. If the Lord extends his life, he will use his life to work for the Lord.

Paul is a captive for Christ, a prisoner of Christ, bound to serve His Majesty, King Jesus.

The same word **labour** or meaning was used by Christ when speaking to His disciples, only Christ translated it by the word **works**.

Matthew 5:16 *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works (**labour, deeds**) and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

Likewise, believer, the saved life is a serving, and surrendered life.

Believer we are not on standby, but always active in the labouring for Christ.

There's a work, a labour for you to perform. Christ has something for you to do.

This is both, general, in that all believers are to serve, but then specifically, some are chosen to enter the pulpit ministry, leave country to share the gospel.

Believer, God has given you time to serve, work, labour for Him.

Do so on the shop floor, behind a desk, in the house, on the streets, surrounded by others, in school.

At every place, our works follow us, we preach the gospel by our life, our deeds.

Oh we are not saved by good works, but we are saved or created unto good works, as **Eph 2:10** confirm.

The same word **labour** translated by **work**, is used by Christ in **John 9:4** *I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work*

Christ lived to do the will of God, He laboured in gospel ministry to preach the gospel.

Christ could say my labour, what God has given me to do, it can't be given to another.

Jesus Christ was obedient unto death, the death of the cross. He prayed in **John 17:4** ***I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,***

The Saviour's words are amazing because, Christ had not yet died, but He prayed these words, because in the mind of God, Christ was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

How can we labour for Christ, get involved in the work in this ministry, supporting the services, Sunday school, toddlers, youth, inviting others.

Christ has commanded His people to go into all the world to preach the gospel unto every creature, that's adults and children.

He said in **Acts 1:8** "**ye shall be my witnesses.**" The word **witnesses** means **to bear record, testify, to be a martyr.**

The book **To the Golden Shore**, tells the story of Adoniram Judson.

Adoniram Judson ***"was the first overseas missionary sent out from America.***

In the early nineteenth century, he and his first wife went to India and, a short while later, to Burma, where he laboured for nearly four decades.

During that time he suffered a horrible imprisonment for a year and a half and lost his wife and children to disease.

Like Paul, he longed to be with the Lord, but, also like the apostle, he considered his work for Christ to be infinitely more important than his personal longings.

He wrote, “If I had not felt certain that every trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated sufferings.”

Living for Christ, labouring for Christ, is to bear record, of Christ to others.

We must labour for Christ in London, testify of His saving grace, transforming power and cleansing blood.

(May the preaching of Christ be scattered from all parts of London, England, yeah United Kingdom, as we labour for Christ.)

Paul’s deed was seen by likeness To Christ in the flesh.

verse 22 “...but if I live in the flesh this is the fruit of my labour...”

The word **fruit** is filled with spiritual meaning. It is the produce or the reaping of what has been sown.

The doctrine taught is lived out.

Paul in referring to ***the fruit of my (or his) labour*** means to see believers he ministers to, bear fruit, show signs of growth.

Now this fruit certainly includes shining as lights outwardly, being a blessing, making impact in the lives of others as Paul was to the saints at Philippi, and Rome.

But the Ultimate focus of bearing fruit in our lives is likeness to Christ, this is following Christ’s example, in actions, attitudes and the fruit of the Spirit.

The Lord Jesus Christ in speaking about the application of redemption in the lives of His people, spoke of a living union, a oneness with them in the picture lesson of a tree or vine and its branches.

The vine and the branches are one. All the life, energy, and fruit the branches show forth flow from the source the vine.

The Lord said in **John 15:1** *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”*

Christ said in **John 15:2** *“bring forth more fruit. Verse 8 “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit...” Verse 16 “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain*

If God permits Paul to live more days on earth, he will live daily for the master, labouring to bear more fruit, making Christ known among the heathen and for the building up for believers as **v25-26** says *“for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ...”*, but above all Paul will have more time to become more like Christ.

But if God brings Paul home to glory, the good work God begun in Paul's life He will perfectly complete it.

Christ completed His labour, because the fruit of His labour, was to purchase of an innumerable company of sinners, as the sand of the sea.

The church *is the fruit of my (Christ's) labour...*

Believer, strive for Christ likeness this is the fruit which you must ripen, develop and will be known by.

I watched a documentary of a man who grew strawberries, I think it was in China, but one single strawberry cost £17, there is another that reaches £50. The man's strawberries attract

people to his farm, and companies and restaurants, to buy them.

The presenter thought what the difference, it's a strawberry, until he tasted it, and he said the sweetness, flavour, juiciness, of it was not to be compared.

He asked the man how he gets his strawberries to taste that good.

The man went through the process, water, extra temperature, when it's cold or warm what to do to protect the strawberries.

The point is those strawberries were the fruit of his labour, he took every effort and through time, he was known for his strawberries.

It is small illustration, to teach by their fruits ye shall know them.

Here is our deed through life, our purpose, to live Christ, labour for Christ and likeness to Christ.