**TO LIVE IS CHRIST, TO DIE IS GAIN**

Philippians 1:12-30

Key Verse 21

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

**Introduction**

Today’s passage shows what Paul’s eager expectation and hope was. His example helps us know the secret of maintaining joy no matter what. In short it is not hinged upon our ever-changing situations. Rather our clear desire, purpose, and goal in Christ overrides our situations and should determine our life pattern. Lao Tzu said, “Watch your thoughts. They become words. Watch your words. They become deeds. Watch your deeds. They become habits. Watch your habits. They become character. Character is everything.” May we examine what our earnest desires are, and the source of our joy. May we find clear answers through the passage.

1. Read verses 12-14. What did Paul want the Philippians to know? (12) How did God use Paul’s imprisonment to advance the gospel? (13-14) What can we learn from God who uses even difficult circumstances to advance the gospel?

1-1, Read verses 12-14.

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters,[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%201#fen-NIV-29374b)] that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. **13** As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%201#fen-NIV-29375c)] and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. **14** And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

1-2, What did Paul want the Philippians to know? (12)

***12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.***

* When Paul was put in Roman prison, some Christians might have thought that the gospel work would be hindered drastically.
* But Paul stressed that in fact, what happened to him, served to advance the gospel.
* Here the word ‘advance’ in Greek is referred to in military language. The gospel is like an army tank that removes obstacles and advances.
* The gospel moves forward against any obstacle or resistance. The gospel still advances in South Sudan, in radically Islamic countries, and in North Korea.
* UBF co-workers in Latin America have been praying in their recent conference for the pioneering of 5 nations (Cuba, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Haiti and Costa Rica).

1-3, How did God use Paul’s imprisonment to advance the gospel? (13-14)

***As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.***



* Paul was put in the imperial prison where the palace guard were stationed with him. These palace guards were the elites of the Roman Empire.
* These elite soldiers guarded imperial prisoners by an attached chain. One at a time, they were chained to Paul during their prisoner guarding duty.
* So Paul must have made the most of this and shared the gospel with them through one to one Bible study.
* Probably Paul prayed each time by saying, “Thank God for sending another Bible student.”
* The prison cell was his Bible house where he could effectively serve one to one Bible study. These soldiers came, accepted the gospel with tears of repentance and joy, being found in Christ.
* Then they went out and shared the gospel with their family members and friends. In this way, the whole palace might have known who Christ is.
* Some of them must have become new partners in the gospel to Paul. It was truly ironic that Paul’s imprisonment brought the gospel to the very heart of the empire.
* Paul’s gospel work in prison inspired Christians around the world to proclaim the gospel courageously.

1-4, What can we learn from God who uses even difficult circumstances to advance the gospel?

* The Philippians saw Paul’s confidence and joy with a clear view point. God would take care of Paul, using him to evangelize the imperial guards in the palace.
* Even in prison, by faith in God, Paul shared the gospel and experienced God’s power to advance the gospel.
* As a matter of fact, when Paul was with the Philippians, there were amazing examples of the sovereign power of God. (Acts 16:11-40)
* God didn't waste Paul's time during the Roman imprisonment. God never wastes our time, though we may waste it by not sensing God's purpose for our lives at the moment.
* Our common passion, zeal, and goal is to advance the gospel continually. Paul was not just another prisoner, but he was an ambassador of Jesus Christ.
* From this we see that Paul could minister effectively and bring glory to God even in less than ideal circumstances. He didn't need everything to be easy and set in order to be fruitful.
* In the old Testament, Daniel and his friends were brought to the Babylonian empire as captives. But God used them greatly for the will of God.
* God has also been using our laymen missionaries continually in spite of the unfavorable environment in many countries. He has done this for His salvation purpose.

2. Read verses 15-19. What contrasting motives does Paul mention for preaching Christ (15-17)? What was the reason for Paul’s rejoicing? (18a) What does he mention as another reason to rejoice? (18b, 19)

2-1, Read verses 15-19.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. **16** The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. **17** The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. **18** But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, **19** for I know that through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

2-2, What contrasting motives does Paul mention for preaching Christ (15-17)?

***It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.***

* Some people worked hard with a pure motive because they loved Jesus and loved Paul. But there were some Anti-Paul groups who were jealous of Paul’s ministry.
* They preached Christ out of selfish ambition. They saw his imprisonment as their opportunity to build up their own ministry and to be more successful without Paul.
* How difficult it would have been for Paul to accept the believers who did things in order to criticize and harm him in his difficulty!
* Ambition isn't necessarily bad; there is nothing wrong in wanting to be the best. But selfish ambition makes a person’s primary motivation, a successful image, instead of striving for true success before God or to strive for God’s glory with a pure motive.

2-3, What was the reason for Paul’s rejoicing? (18a)

***But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.***

* Paul was not affected by the ill will of those with impure motives. He was not concerned about people’s attitude towards him. He was free from people.
* He was concerned about Christ’s reputation and people’s attitude towards Christ. Paul loved Jesus and had only one point to preach which is Christ.
* His mind was full of Christ. Paul was not a self-centered, but a Christ-centered man. The important thing to Paul was that Christ is preached.
* Other things are peripheral concerns. Other things are secondary, next to Christ. Paul also had the broad view of a kingdom builder’s mind.
* Although God’s work was not done by himself, his ministry, other groups, or preachers, he rejoiced because God was using them to expand His kingdom through them.
* What was Paul’s secret of joy? The secret of Paul’s joy was his Christ-centered mindset. His source of joy was ‘because of Christ’.
* He rejoiced when Christ was preached. John the Baptist said about Jesus, “He must become greater; I must become less” (John 3:30).
* But many Christians think, “Jesus must become greater and I must become greater too.” That is why they lose the source of joy.
* Paul was not a Christ centered man from the beginning. Before meeting Christ, he was a self-centered and proud man, seeking his honor and promoting his own name. His life motto was ‘to live is my honor.’ His name was ‘Saul’ meaning ‘king’.
* However, when the risen Jesus met him on the road to Damascus, he was struck by the light of Jesus. He found himself a wretched sinner who needed Jesus’ blood to forgive his sins.
* He found all hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ. He was like a man who sold all his possessions to buy hidden treasure in a field. He was changed from a self- centered man to a Christ-centered man. He found the secret of joy in Christ.

2-4, What does he mention as another reason to rejoice? (18b, 19)

***Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.***

* The word “deliverance” may refer to release from prison, or eternal salvation from death. Simply speaking, where the Holy Spirit is, we have true freedom!
* Although Paul was imprisoned, he was not alone. Many Christians in the Philippian church prayed for Paul.
* Most of all, God provided Paul with the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Christ who dwelt in Paul caused his spirit to be rejoice. It filled his heart with thanksgiving and peace.
* The Spirit of Christ formed a Christ-centered mindset in Paul. It was another secret for his great joy no matter what!
* Paul could maintain joy and courage because of God’s provision of the Spirit of Christ.
* May God help us know that we are sinners who are in need of Jesus. Let us take off self-centeredness through Jesus’ blood and grow as Christ-centered people.

3. Read verses 20-24. What was Paul’s eager expectation? (20) What can we learn from his remark? (21) What inner conflict did Paul experience? (22-24) For what reason did he want to remain in the body (25-26)?

3-1, Read verses 20-24.

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. **21** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. **22** If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! **23** I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; **24** but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. **25** Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, **26** so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

3-2, What was Paul’s eager expectation? (20)

***I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.***

* The word “eagerly expect” literally means “to hope and wait for something with a stretched neck.” It is a burning desire to have something.
* Everyone is eagerly expecting and hoping for something. Paul’s eager expectation and hope could have been his release from prison and to live as a free man. But it was not.
* Paul’s eager hope and expectation was that Christ would be exalted in his body. Paul’s main purpose of living was to glorify Christ.
* Paul eagerly hoped to reveal Christ in his body whether by life or by death. He transcended life or death. His life motto was ‘For the glory of Christ’.
* A psalmist in chapter 42 reveals his eager expectation, saying, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”
* The inner desire of the Psalmist was his thirst for the living God. He eagerly sought for God. God blesses one’s inner thirst for God. A person who thirsts for God will encounter God according to his desire.
* Jesus showed his eager expectation and hope before the cross. Jesus prayed.

John 12:27 reads,

“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”

* Although Jesus’ cross was a heavy burden for it caused Him to bear the the sin of the world, Jesus eagerly wanted to glorify God’s name even through his death on the cross.

3-3, What can we learn from his remark? (21)

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

* “To live is Christ” has the same meaning with “Christ lives in me.”
* “To live is Christ” means to be united with Christ through his death and resurrection. This was the wellspring of Paul’s joy and the secret of his victorious life.

Galatians 2:20 says,

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

* Christ is the Son of God who loved us and gave his life for us by shedding his precious blood for the forgiveness of our sins.
* Christ loved us until his body was broken completely by the nailing and piercing of His body with a spear. Jesus became a ransom sacrifice to purchase our salvation.

John 6:56 says,

“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them.”

* Now we eat Jesus’ body and drink his blood which sustains our spiritual life daily. In this way, we are united with Christ. We have communion with Christ daily. We receive the Spirit of Christ through Jesus’ word.
* Before Paul made a decision to live for Christ, Christ loved him first and died for him. When we open our hearts and invite Jesus to come in and reign as our Lord and Savior, he comes in and establishes a personal relationship with us.
* Christ dwells in us communicating with us through his Spirit. We and Christ can have constant fellowship in the Spirit.
* “To die is gain” means that Paul was not afraid of death. He had a living hope in the kingdom of God. Paul saw death as gain in his hope of being with Christ and entering into eternal rest. He was in the world, but he lived beyond this world.

3-4, What inner conflict did Paul experience? (22-24)

***22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.***

* Paul was in dilemma between two desires—to go on living in the body and to die and be with Jesus. Paul knew the benefit of living in the body which would result in fruitful labor for him.
* Paul saw death as a departure, similar to a plane departing to take us to meet someone whom we have longed to see.



* Paul’s desire was not departure itself, but to be with Jesus in heaven. There are so many things to look forward to in our home in heaven: a heavenly mansion, the river of life, the pearly gates, the New Jerusalem, eternal joy and peace, without sin, sorrow, pain, and so on.
* There are also many people in heaven whom we want to meet like loved ones who have gone before us, all the saints, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.
* Paul must have eagerly have wanted to see Jesus, who loved him and died for him. His desire was to be with Jesus forever after death.
* Then what was his decision? Paul said in verse 24, **“But it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.”** He still had work to do for Jesus, so he was confident that he would not die yet.

3-5, For what reason did he want to remain in the body (25-26)?

***25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.***

* He was convinced that since God’s people needed him, he would remain with them for their progress and joy in the faith.
* He wanted to be a blessing to them. He yielded his desire for the sake of the remaining believers. His interest was others’ progress and joy in the faith.
* Paul’s desire was that others live for Christ and boast in Christ Jesus because of his presence. Paul was happy to become a facilitator to others.
* Now, we know how to obtain this secret of joy. When we love Jesus first, others second and ourselves last, we can have real joy.

4. Read verses 27-30. What was Paul’s exhortation? (27) How can we overcome fear? (28) What has been granted to us in addition to faith? (29) What example did Paul show them? (30)

4-1, Read verses 27-30.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit,[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%201#fen-NIV-29389e)] striving together as one for the faith of the gospel **28** without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. **29** For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, **30** since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

4-2, What was Paul’s exhortation? (27)

***Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel***

* Paul encouraged the Philippians to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.
* **“I will know that you stand firm in one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.”** The church is one body of Christ. Jesus also prayed in John 17:22, **“…that they may be one as we are one.”**
* In team rowing, all members must be in rhythm and row together in the same direction. If they row against each other, they will all lose. Likewise, we stand together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the gospel as one body of Christ.

4-3, How can we overcome fear? (28)

***28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.***

* Despite opposition, Paul wanted the Philippians to have the same kind of boldness he had.
* When our spiritual enemies fail to make us afraid they have failed completely, because they really have no other weapon than fear and intimidation.
* When we are not in any way terrified by our enemies, it is also evidence of their own salvation.

4-4, What has been granted to us in addition to faith? (29)

***29 For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,***

* Another aspect of living in a manner worthy of the gospel is to participate in the sufferings of Christ.
* No one loves suffering in nature. But suffering for Christ produces Christ’s image in us (Ro 5:3-4) like perseverance, character, and hope.
* God grants believers the privilege of suffering for Christ. This enables us to know and love Jesus more, to grow in his image and to glorify God.

4-5, What example did Paul show them? (30)

***since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.***

* When Paul and the Philippians were going through the same suffering and struggling, they were able to taste the same joy and glory in the Lord.
* Paul set a good example in going through the same struggle in terms of enduring suffering for the namesake of Jesus. He was willing to suffer for the benefit of others so that they could grow in Christ.
* May the Lord help us to grow in faith like him so that we may be good soldiers of Christ.

**Conclusion**

What is burning in our heart? Is it glorifying Christ or being glorified in my own life? Is it exalting Christ through our life, or just achieving our dreams and the well-being of our family? Some people live day after day without life direction. Their life is filled with aimless desperation or distraction, without hope. We Christians need to have a clear life purpose and a burning desire to live for Christ. Our utmost desire shapes our value system and even the view of death. May our heart be burning for Christ and let us live for his glory. By saying, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Paul lived his life not to preserve and promote himself, but to glorify Jesus Christ, for he died to his old nature thanks to Jesus and he only desired to live for Jesus and His people. May the Lord help us to find the same goal and joy in this transient world. Amen.

**One word: For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain**