

Life & Death

13 - Living the Simple Gospel: Philippians
Church on the Park | Sunday, 12 March 2017

Text: Philippians 1:21-26, especially - "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

Theme: Christ alone is life, without him everything is death.

Intro: Here we see Paul's unique perspective on life and death. And this is a perspective that we all need to have as Christ's followers. Paul says, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." I want us to dive into this verse some more, and also talk about it in light of God's developing work in our lives. The Father wants to bring you to a place where the very motivation of who you are and everything you do is Christ. No longer are you at the centre; he is your heart. This will cause your life to be fruitful, and not just have an outward form of godliness.

1) To die is gain (Phil. 1:21).

- I'd like to start with what is **last, first**.
 - Paul says, "to die is **gain**."
 - Now naturally we all think of death as a **loss**.
 - If we were honest we would say, "to die is to lose." In all literature, **death** is a **loss**, a **tragedy**.
 - When my mom died, people kept saying, "**Sorry for your loss**." These are very **kind** words.
 - But, if I put things in the **right perspective**, I didn't lose, I **gained**.
 - I gained a mother who is with Jesus—I gained, more than I lost.
- Don't be so **afraid** of **dying** that you don't **live**.
- For Paul, to die is to go into **eternal glory**, it's to be **with Jesus**. It's to win, to gain, not to lose.
 - Death is **not defeat** for a Christian, it's only a **doorway** to a **far better place**.
 - Now, if you are not right with God than death is a doorway into hell. That's scary.
 - But for those who belong to Jesus, death is the **beginning** of a whole new life.
 - As **Bonhoeffer** said as he was being led to execution, "This is the **end**. To me, the **beginning of life**."
- Christians don't think about death like the world. We have **hope**.
 - Yes, we do **feel the loss** of a loved one, but it's **eclipsed** by **glory**.
- Since death is so glorious, **why not just die right now?**
 - This is the **tension**. And Paul feels this **tension**.
- Death is glorious, but **life is glorious** too.
 - Paul **starts** off this verse with "For me, to live [záo] is Christ."
 - Life is a **tremendous experience** of **Jesus**.
 - What I am really after is **not just** being able to **quote** this verse, '**To live is Christ**,' but to **understand** and **experience** this.
- The **paradox** of this all is that Jesus taught us that **true life—God's life, eternal life—begins with death**.
 - "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his **cross daily** and follow me. For whoever wishes to **save** his life will **lose** it, but whoever **loses** his life for **My sake**, he is the one who will **save it**" (Luke 9:23-24).
- **Paul** was someone who lost his life. He even said elsewhere, "**I die daily**" (1 Cor. 15:31).

- This is why he **truly lived** and wasn't **fearful** of death—because it already happened in him **daily**.

2) To live is Christ (Phil. 1:21).

- **Life is not about me** or my pleasure. It's about **Christ**.
- Remember we talked about the three stages of the birthing of a vision or dream from God (**3D Christians**).
 - First, is the **dream** itself. This is the **seed** and must come from God himself if it will give life.
 - Second, is the **development**. This is much longer than the dream. It's in the development that you **learn** that **to live is Christ**. Life is not about my dream, it's about **his purposes**. The development phases is where the **dream** is **purified**. It's also where the **seed dies**.
 - It's in the **wilderness** that God **delivers** you from the **lust of the flesh**, the **lust of the eyes** and the **pride of life** (1 John 2:15-17).
 - Last, after you are **purified**, comes the **delivery stage**. But, you can only deliver the dream if you have been delivered of lust and pride.
 - And if you pass the **test of the wilderness**, you will **birth** a **ministry in the power** of the **Spirit**, rather than just start a **business**.
 - Many people only birth a **ministry** with a **form of godliness**, but not in the **power** of the **Holy Spirit** (2 Tim. 3:5).
 - Unless you are purified in the wilderness, you will only have a form of godliness.
- Today, I want to deal with the '**lust of the flesh**.'
 - This '**lust of the flesh**' is one of the **three main weeds** that the Father is **uprooting** from you in the **wilderness**.
 - *What is lust?* It's a **strong desire** that **motivates**. James 1:15 (cf. John 8:44, Rom. 7:7, 2 Tim. 2:22, Rom. 6:12).
- Let's look at **Jesus' first temptation** in **Luke 4:1-3** & **Matthew 4:1-4**.
 - How **Jesus birthed** his **own ministry** through the **wilderness** is an **example** to us. The more you **resist God** in the wilderness, the **longer** the **development phase** goes.
 - And if it goes too long, it's possible to lose the dream all together.
 - Jesus' response: "It is written, 'Man shall not **live [záo]** on bread alone, but on **every word** that proceeds out of the **mouth of God**' (Matt. 4:4)
- It's only in the **wilderness** that you **learn** that **to live**, for you, is **Christ**.
 - "**To live is Christ**" need to become **more than** a **motto**, it needs to become the very **mode of your being**.
- First, in the **wilderness** God **reveals** what you are **hungry and thirsty** for.
 - *What do you hunger and thirst for?*
 - A companion, a friend, money, food, a house, recognition, fame, to get by, a great family.
 - **None** of these is **specifically sin**, but it is **sin** if these are **your life**, your **first thing**. They are sin if they are your lord, and not Jesus.
- The **first temptation** deals with the **lust of the flesh**. In other words, what you **hunger** and **thirst** for. *What is your bread? Where is your strength and sustenance coming from?*
- *Are you trying to make **stones** into **bread**?* Do you see that what you hunger and thirst for is just a **stone**—it's **lifeless**?
 - You can't **convert** a **stone** into **bread**, though many people try.
 - They are looking for bread from somebody rather than God. **Money** is just a **stone**. A **house** is just **stone**. A friend is just a stone.
 - But if Christ is your first and true bread, than all these things become living stones, rather than lifeless stones.

- When God is **developing** you is he getting at your **motivations**. *Are you motivated by your hunger for stones, lifeless objects? Or are you motivated by God's Word, Jesus Christ. Is he your bread of life?* Before you eat, do you feed on him.
- The **purpose** of the **wilderness**: **Deuteronomy 8:2-3**

3) To live is to feast on Christ as your living bread and drink (John 6:41-58)

- You **overcome** the **lust of the flesh** through **constantly feeding** on **Christ** and **his Word**.
 - Feeding on **Christ** as your **manna** will **take away** the **hunger pains of lust**.
- In this passage, **John** is **taking us back** to the **wilderness**. He is teaching us that the **Jews** still **did not learn** the lesson of the wilderness.
 - **Jesus** was the **Father's Word**, **his manna**—yet, they **would not eat** his Word and kept **grumbling**.
- The first thing you should do in the **morning** is **gather manna**.
 - **Feast** on **God's Word** and **find Christ** in there.
- And just, like you need at least **three meals a day**, you are going to need three or more meals in God's Word a day.
 - *Why?* **You don't live on bread alone**, but on **every word** that proceeds out of the mouth of God.
- When you do **live** on **God's Word**, you **truly live**. You will truly understand that to **live** is **Christ**.

Conclusion: See life and death as God sees it. Real life is Christ. Feasting on Christ as your manna is the secret to truly living. Christ's life and word delivers you from the lust of the flesh. When Christ is really your life then to die is to gain.