

## Christ, The Person Of Life

Philippians 1:21

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

The Book of Philippians is a very personal book, and it is a book of rejoicing. It is the only New Testament letter in which the word "sin" is not found. Over and over again Paul uses the word "rejoice" and "rejoicing." It has in it the unmistakable note of victory. And when you remember that Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison, as we will see in the first chapter that he wasn't even certain about his future, and chances were very good that he would be executed. And all the time Paul writes, he is exhorting these Christians to "rejoice always in the Lord."

What happens to a man when you take him away from his friends and his family? When you cut off ties from his work? When you put him in a Roman prison where he is never alone, and twentyfour hours a day he is chained to a Roman guard? When you hang over his head the possibility of imminent death? When his friends and colleagues misinterpret and misjudge? And many of them turn against him? What happens to a man in circumstances such as that? Well, it all depends on the man!

Paul Reeves wrote a book on Book of Philippians and he called it "The Adequate Man." I think that is the typical understatement, for the least that we can say about Paul under these adverse circumstances is that he was adequate!

And yet, it is not so much that Paul was adequate, but that Paul has found an adequate answer. Paul is a man who has found the secret that each of us needs to find. Because when you take the circumstances in which Paul found himself - unfair circumstances, unfriendly people, imminent death hanging over his head, seemingly left alone in the world, and everybody forsaking him. And yet, he still

saying, “Rejoice always in the Lord.” There is absolutely no complaining, no panic, and no selfpity. I would have to say that Paul found the secret to living life to its fullest!

And each chapter, in the Book of Philippians deals, to a certain extent, with a different expression of this answer, which Paul has found. Chapter One reveals Christ as the *Person of life*; Chapter two reveals Christ as the *Pattern of life*. Chapter three reveals, Christ as the Pursuit of life. Chapter four reveals Christ as the Peace of life, the Power of life, and the *Provision of life*. And these are the studies that we are going to be doing in the next few Sundays, and I am praying that the Holy Spirit will reveal to us the same adequate answer that the apostle Paul discovered as he sat languishing in a Roman Prison.

In order for us to see the setting for tonight’s study, I am going to read verses 12 thru 21 of Philippians chapter 1, “And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard- knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear. It’s true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. But that doesn’t matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance. For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don’t know which is better. I’m torn between two desires: I long to go and be with

Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live.”

**Now verse 21 is the pivotal, point of that chapter, and I think is the secret that Paul discovered that made him adequate for any circumstance.** And, I am confident, that it will make any person adequate to deal with any outward circumstance that you and I might face in life.

The source of Paul’s **conquering courage**, and the cause of his **attitude of victory** is found in verse 21, “For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better.”

**Verse 21 is just a small brief statement, but in it is packed with four tremendous implications, that I want us to look at tonight.** When Paul says, “For me to live is Christ,” he is saying, “The best way to sum up my life is Christ being in control of every circumstance. It is not about my struggles, it is not about my imprisonment, it is not about me doing the best I can, it is Christ living His life through me.”

And when you and I can come to that place in our Christian experience, then four things will be realized in our lives.

**First of all, it makes the Christian life possible.** Paul put it this way in Galatians 2:20 puts it this way, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The bible is teaching us that the Christian life is just a person Jesus Christ, living in my body. **And this makes the Christian life possible.** You may not be able to live the Christian life, but God has given us a Savior who can.

**Maybe some of you have read a little booklet by Stewart Briscoe entitled "The Christian Life."** He says that his Christian life came in four different stages. **The first stage was, "This is easy."** Right after he was saved he knew it was going to be easy to live for Jesus. **The second stage was, "This is difficult."** After a little while, living for Jesus got to be more trying and became more difficult. **The third stage was, "This is impossible."** He realized that for him to live up to the demands of a holy God in his flesh was utterly impossible. **And**

that is when he found victory, because he realized that even though it was impossible for him God never intended for him to live the Christian life in his own strength. And he realized that the Christian life was possible only as Jesus Christ himself lived His life through him. So the fourth stage is, "This is exciting." Once you and I come to the place of recognizing that for me to live the Christian life is impossible that is when, God is able to reveal to me that a Christian life can be lived only by one Person, and that is Christ himself.

But what does that tell us here tonight? Simply this the Christian life can be lived by every child of God, for every Christian has Jesus living in his or her heart, as seen in the words of Jesus in John 14:20, "I'm in you and you in me." It is Jesus who lives the Christian life through me, as seen in Philippians 1:6, "...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." And we have also been told in Philippians 2:13, "...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Child of God, the Christian life is simply allowing Christ to live His life through us.

Every Christian, sooner or later, begins to struggle with the weakness of the flesh: his own life: your temper, your evil desire, your inability to get along with other people, your incapacity to love as you should. And the answer is this YOU can't get along with this person or that person, but JESUS can! YOU can't forgive that person that has done you wrong, but JESUS can! YOU can't control your gossiping tongue, but JESUS can! YOU can't witness like you should, but Jesus can! My friend, the resource of the Christian life is Christ Himself! And when you have Christ you have all you need to live the Christian life!

Dr. Stephen Olford made this statement, "No demand is made upon my life which is not made upon the life of Christ in me!"

Jesus Christ is equaled to every situation, and equaled to every condition that you will ever face in your lifetime. And if that is true, and it is, then you are without an excuse for not being all of what God has called you to be!

**Not only is living the Christian life possible, it is also practical.**

Frank Stovall, who was a Music professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, tells how he came to the place of recognizing the power, and the reality, of the indwelling Christ in his life. He says, "What finally brought me to my knees was another person. A student came, to me with a serious problem. He had decided to literally sell out to Satan. In my spiritual condition, I was unable to help. I was defeated at the very point where I desired victory. I was a Minister but was unable to help others. I entered into a season of prayer, which was broken only by work demands. I prayed for faith to believe God's Word. I was praying for my friend, but was finding answers for myself as well."

**Now I want to say to you tonight that a great majority of Christians have that same frustration even today.** Pastors, Deacons, Sunday School Teachers, Ministers of Music, Ministers of Education, Ministers of Youth, and every Christian at one time or another realizes, if he/she has any sense at all, his/her inability and his inadequacy to minister to other people in their own strength. And the only way that one can minister to another is through the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In other words, we have to allow Christ to work through us as we reach out to bring forth the love of Jesus through to them.

**It just exhausts me sometimes to read through I and 2 Corinthians to see what all Paul endured for the cause of Christ.** When he was getting ready to go up to Jerusalem they said, "Listen to reason, if you go up to Jerusalem to witness you are going to be in deep trouble and probably." Acts 20:24 gives us his answer, "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." Paul realized the Christian life was practical, because it wasn't him that was serving; it was Christ being released through him, as he sought to meet the needs of others. There is nothing that makes a person feel his inability, and inadequacies, any more than when people come to you

with a problem, and you feel helpless to do anything to help in their times of need.

**When I was in college I majored in Psychology and minored in Religion.** When I went to Seminary I majored in Religion and minored Psychology. I have a whole bookshelf filled with books on Counseling and helps, but I have come to realize that the only real help in the time of need is Jesus. **What people need is, not my professional ability, nor my denominational clichés.** What they really need is the life of Christ released through my personality, touching their lives. And when I come to the place of realizing that I have no ability apart from Christ, that I can do nothing apart from Him working in and through my life; then I too can realize this great truth, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." **But not until then!**

So when Paul says, "For me to live is Christ," he is simply saying that the Christian life is *practical* as well as *possible*.

Not only is the Christian life *possible* and *practical*, it is also *purposeful*, as seen in verse 20, "According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death." **The purpose of every child of God should be to magnify Christ in our words, in our attitude, and in our every day living.** Romans 12:1 is way, "And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him." **Child of God, God wants to use life as a display for Jesus Christ!** Jesus put it this way in Matthew 22:37, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind." **Therefore, every child of God should have for his/her purpose to magnify Christ in their everyday living!**

The Christian life is not only *possible*, and *practical*, it is also *peaceful*, as seen in verses 12-18, "And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. <sup>13</sup> For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And

because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear. It's true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. <sup>18</sup> But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice."

**Paul is in prison for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ!** He has not broken any law; he has not stolen anything; he has not committed, treason. He, is there, for simply preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. He is mistreated, misjudged, and misunderstood, and yet in Philippians 4:11 he says, "Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have."

**Everyone of us in this building will, sooner or later, be faced with unfair circumstance in our lives, hurt feelings, and misunderstandings.** And the test of being a Christian is how we will react to them. Paul says in verse 18, "What then?" A literal translation of the Greek is "So what?" If we are going to have that "peace that passes understanding" and that "joy unspeakable," then we are must realize that our main purpose in the magnify Christ in our everyday living!

**Do you know what the Holy Spirit does in the life of a Christian when we are faced with unfair circumstances, and hostile relations ships?** He applies Jesus to that particular situation! And it is through His love, and through His grace, and through His understanding, that we are given the, victory that brings us peace. It is no wonder that James 3:18 says, "Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

It is biblical fact, the Christian life is a life of constant decision making, as seen in Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Not only is the Christian life possible and practical, and purposeful, and peaceful, it is profitable. Paul says this in verse 21, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." The Greek reads like this, "For living to me means simply Christ, and if I should die I would merely gain more of him."

When Paul says "to die is gain," he is not talking about the act of dying, he is talking about the end result of dying. Paul is simply saying, "Living on this earth is to live *for*, but when I get to heaven I will be able to live *with* Christ!"

The word "gain" here is the word for "profit." If your life is for "self," then to die is "loss." If your life is "business" then to die is "loss." If your life is "pleasure" then to die is "loss." In other words, if your life is anything else but Christ, then when you die you are bankrupt!

But Glory to God, if your life is built and hinges around the ministry of Jesus Christ, then "to die is gain." And that is why Paul could say in verse 23, "For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." The Bible tells us, "our citizenship is in heaven" and that we are "as sojourners and pilgrims." Children of God, this world is not my home, for I am going to that "city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God!"