

Philippians

Part 6 – How to Live When Dying is Gain

Philippians 1:18b-26

After explaining his joy about the gospel going out from preachers despite poor their wrong motives, Paul looks to other reasons for his joy. These verses for this week contain some of the most referenced words of Scripture that for many have become their anthem for life anthem, or their life verse: “To live is Christ, to die is gain.” These words are so popularized that they even find themselves engraved on thousands of tombstones throughout the world. But what is Paul’s main emphasis in writing this statement? Is he really talking about death? Or is he actually talking about what it means to truly be living? Which is it?



What we read in these verses is Paul’s struggle between his present calling and the future outcome of his life. In this struggle we learn of three key benefits that instruct us on how to live now, even when dying is gain.

Main Idea: The more we think about Christ, the less we will think about ourselves, and the more we will love God and his church.

1. Christian Confidence (vv18b-20)

- One of the blessings of Christianity in the face of suffering is the presence of Christ. Our sufferings should cause us to affirm God’s presence rather than decry a false abandonment. We have his presence in the Holy Spirit, who calls into a body of other believers: his local church.
- Paul has an inner peace throughout his sufferings. Because of the prayers of the church for him and the provision of God, he can think rightly about his present and future.
- Paul does not live in fear as to the outcome of his life. Like Paul, Christians receive the confidence that the events of their lives are not random occurrences but part of God’s good and wise design.

2. Christian Deliverance (vv20-21)

- Paul summarizes the doctrine of salvation in a simple summary: To live is Christ and to die is gain. Only when one has been made alive by Christ does one understand that they are truly alive. Dying is therefore not a “getting out” of this life now, but rather, it is a gaining, or addition, to the life they already have in Christ.

3. Christian Necessity (vv22-26)

- There is tension in this life for Christians between the desire to remain here on earth or be with Christ. But the reasons for remaining are not what we often make of them.
- On account of the salvation received in Christ, Christians have a necessary work to glorify God by serving the church. The reason that drives Paul to continue in the flesh is to make much of Christ by tending to the faith of his brothers and sisters.