

# Notes from Pastor Tim Gamston's morning sermon on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022

## First in a new series from Philippians entitled "To Live is Christ"

### Part one – "To Live is Christ"

#### Scripture references from the ESV

**Philippians 1:18-26** Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

**NB** please see p4 for the full reading

How do you view death? Do you see it as loss or gain? For most of us, death is not something we want to think about and we put it to the back of our minds. The Bible tells us that death is an enemy. Death is a thief and robs us of the things that are precious to us. It causes grief, bringing sorrow to families, communities and nations.

#### **How can death possibly be gain?**

Yet this is how Paul describes it when he writes to the Christians living in the Roman colony of Philippi. Paul lays bare his heart for the believers, for the gospel and for Christ. He tells them that **to die is gain (v21 above)**. That is an easy thing to say (or sing as we often do!) when you are not facing death, but when you know that your life on earth is potentially coming to an end, speaking about death as gain takes on an entirely different aspect. Paul is writing this letter from a Roman prison, and may be executed, yet he could write those words. How could he do this?

Paul could write those words because of what he treasured in life.

**Death is gain for Paul because it will bring him into the presence of Christ who is his life (v 21 above)**

**What we live for in this life will determine whether we gain or lose when we die.**  
If we live for the things that belong to this world, death will only be loss.

- If we live for money, to die is to leave it all behind
- If we live for fame, to die is to be quickly forgotten
- If we live for power, to die is to lose it all.
- If we live for things, to die is to go emptyhanded

**We might say: for me to live is everything in this world, to die is loss.**

**Paul could write: For me to live is Christ...to die is gain**

Paul lived for Christ, and death was simply the doorway out of everything the world treasures and into the eternal presence of the one he loved, served and honoured – Jesus Christ.

In our Western culture, and particularly in this generation, we need to grasp that:

**What we live for in this life will determine whether we gain or lose when we die.**

**Can you say with Paul 'for me to live is Christ'?**

Paul shows us what this means in practice and through this letter we will come to see how to live Christ.

- 1) **To live to know Christ more fully (3:8 see p4).** For Paul, this life has been given to us, not so that we can amass lots of stuff, but so that we might come to know Jesus. Paul was willing to sacrifice any good things he could have or do if it meant he could know Jesus better.

**He put knowing Jesus as the greatest priority.**

Paul had seen Jesus with his physical eyes. At one time he had hated Jesus and his followers, but Jesus, in all his risen glory, met Paul and Paul's life was transformed. Now, he wanted to serve the followers of Christ, and to know this Jesus for himself. Is that your goal in life?

- What are you willing to sacrifice in order to know Christ more fully?
- Do you ask yourself every day how you can know Jesus better?

Paul sacrificed a prosperous and prestigious life in Judaism in order to know Christ. What is keeping you from spending time listening to Jesus, as he speaks to you through his word or talking to him in prayer?

**What do you need to consider loss in order to know Christ?**

- 2) **To live resting in Christ's righteousness (3:8-9 see p4).** Before Paul met Jesus, he thought he needed to make himself right with God through his own efforts. However, he came to see that all his efforts to do that were useless and that it is only Jesus who could make him right with God.

It is Jesus alone who takes our sin away and he alone who provides the righteousness we need to be right with God. **It is the righteousness of Christ, given by God, through faith, that puts us right with God.**

For Paul, to live Christ was to live resting in the assurance that God accepted him, not because he was a good person but because Christ was his righteousness.

**What are you trusting in for God to let you into his holy presence?**

**3) To live to honour Christ (vv19-20 above).** Paul was facing possible execution because of his faith in Jesus and the church was praying for him. Because the Spirit of God was helping him, Paul knew that he would be delivered. However, deliverance for Paul was to honour Christ, no matter whether he lived or died. Deliverance for Paul did not mean escaping execution, but instead it meant escaping the cowardice of being ashamed of Jesus, and being able to honour him in death.

**Do we have such a high view of Christ that we want to see him honoured even if we are mocked for being his followers?**

**4) To live rejoicing in Christ everyday (3:1,4:4 see p4).** The Philippian church was facing persecution (1:29-30 see p4), and Paul's command to them is to rejoice! The only way it is possible to rejoice in the face of suffering is when you know Christ and are resting in his righteousness, seeking to honour him in all you do. To live Christ means to find our joy in him. That joy is not at the mercy of circumstances and doesn't crumble when unexpected things happen. That joy is founded in knowing fellowship with Jesus, and being assured that he qualifies us to enter our eternal rest. That joy is founded on seeing in him a beauty that leaves us in awe of him.

**Where do you find your joy?**

**5) To live in the strength Christ gives (4:13 see p4).** The Christian life is beyond our ability to live. God calls us to a life that is so high and holy that, left to ourselves, we could never achieve it.

The point of knowing Jesus is that we are not left to ourselves. He lives in us by his Spirit and enables us to live the life he commands. To live Christ means that moment by moment, we seek his strength for everything we have to do. **If your goal is to honour Christ, do you seek him and his strength in everything we do?**

**6) To live to make Christ known (1:12-13 see p4).** When we have someone who is special to us, we cannot stop talking about them, and Paul was so taken with Jesus that he kept talking about him to the guards. Even though he is not free to preach Christ publicly in the cities, he can rejoice that others are (1:14-18 see p4).

**Are you so taken with Christ that you can't stop talking about him to others?**

**7) To live as Christ lived (2:3-4 see p4).** Here Paul celebrates the humility of Christ. Though he is God, he humbled himself by adding a human nature to his divine nature and by giving up his life to death on a cross. Paul tells us to have the same humble mindset when it comes to our relationships, living a life

of humble servant-heartedness and using our strength to meet the needs of others as Christ did.

### **Are you seeking to live as Christ lived here on earth?**

**8) To live to gain Christ (3:8 see p4).** Paul added up everything he had valued in the world before he met Jesus, and considered it all rubbish in comparison to the worth of Christ.

Money, fame, status, houses, land, cars, motorbikes, qualifications, followers on social media, investments, holidays – the list is endless. These are all things that that world considers important, and Christians have taken on these values, breathing the air of the culture we live in. Yet none of them are worth more than Christ.

### **Is there anything you are pursuing at the expense of gaining Christ?**

This life only works because Christ is personally knowable, eternally satisfying, joyfully delightful, soul-saving and because

### **Christ is the greatest treasure in the universe.**

If that wasn't true, then none of this would work. For Paul, and for many of God's people, life is not worth living without Christ. That is what it means to live Christ.

#### **• How are you doing in 'living Christ'?**

Some of you may not even have begun. The world is far too attractive and you have not yet come to see the beauty of Christ. Your spiritual eyes have not been opened and none of this makes sense. If this is you, please see the foolishness of pursuing life at the expense of knowing, gaining and treasuring Christ. If you make life about anything except Christ, then all you have to look forward to is eternal loss.

### **Death will not be gain if life now is not Christ.**

For many of us, that miracle has happened, and we have begun to live Christ. Paul tells us that living Christ is an ongoing pursuit and that means being intentional. We need to ask ourselves questions like these every day:

- How can I use the time available to me today to grow in my knowledge and love for Christ?
- Will what I am about to do bring honour to Christ or dishonour him?
- What can I do today to make Christ known?
- Will this next purchase lead me to treasure Christ or take my heart away from him?
- What would it look like today to trust Christ for his strength?
- What do I need to consider rubbish in order to gain Christ?

If you live like this, you cannot ever lose. You might lose the things that the world craves but those are things that they will lose one day anyway, when death takes them.

**If you make Jesus your life now, then what you gain in death is Jesus.**

If Jesus is your treasure, your joy, your life **now**, then you will come into the fullness of your treasure, your joy, your life when you die.

**You will come into the fullness of Christ forever.  
If you make your life all about Jesus, you can't ever lose.**

**Philippians 1:1-26** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup> I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace,<sup>[d]</sup> both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. <sup>12</sup> I want you to know, brothers,<sup>[e]</sup> that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard<sup>[f]</sup> and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word<sup>[g]</sup> without fear. <sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

**3:8-9** <sup>indeed</sup>, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith

**3:1** Finally, my brothers, <sup>[a]</sup> rejoice in the Lord.

**4:4** <sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

**1:29-30** For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, <sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

**1:12-13** I want you to know, brothers, <sup>[e]</sup> that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard <sup>[f]</sup> and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

**1:14-18** And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word <sup>[g]</sup> without fear. <sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

**2:3-4** Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

**3:8** Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ