Note for Philippians 1:18b-30

**To Live is Christ, to Die is Gain**

[Philippians 1:18b-30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=%20Philippians%201%3A18b-30&version=ESV)

Key Verse 21: **“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”**

Introduction:

We can have various different aspects for our lives and death. But today’s passage shows what Paul’s first priority of his life and ultimate purpose of his life., what he really wants to achieve through his life. Through this we can think about the ultimate goal for our lives and what kind of attitude we should have for our life and death.

Look at **verses 18-20.**

**18What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, 19for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 20as 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 honored in my body, whether by life or by death.**

Christ became Paul’s personal goal. Paul’s personal relationship with Christ is driving force behind what he said today “to live is Christ and to die is gain”. It was revealed in chapter 3. “I want to know Christ and his power of resurrection and fellowship of sharing his sufferings.” Motivation to draw people to commit Christ fully comes from fully focused and single-minded relationship with Christ. We can see Paul’s life purpose or goal from “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”.

1. **Why is Paul rejoicing even though he is in prison, what is his hope, and what does he have “full courage” in? What two things does Paul say will lead to his deliverance? What does this reveal about how our prayers can work together with the Spirit of Jesus Christ?**

B. **What two things does Paul say will lead to his deliverance?**

The prayer of Philippians and the Spirit of Jesus. He mentioned prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit as the reasons for his deliverance.

**C. What does this reveal about how our prayers can work together with the Spirit of Jesus Christ?**

According to Paul, prayer of Philippians and the Spirit of Jesus helped his deliverance.

The Holy Spirit also prays. The Holy Spirit intercedes for his saints according to God’s will as Romans 8:27 says “And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

1. **How can we rejoice, hope, and have full courage like Paul, even when we are in a trial? How can we pray for others, like the Philippians?**
2. **How can we rejoice, hope, and have full courage like Paul, even when we are in a trial?**

When we have a clear goal to honor Christ in our own body we can rejoice, have hope, and full courage like Paul even in trails.

1. **How can we pray for others, like the Philippians?**

We can start to pray for the gospel workers starting from our own co-workers who preach the gospel.

**Note from Q 1 & 2 combined**

Paul’s expectation is that he would not be ashamed in any situation.

**Extra question: What can we learn from verses 19-20 or what does he really mean in verses 19-20?**

19for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 20as 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 honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Paul’s prayer topic was not to be released from the prison or not to be killed. His prayer was not in whether he would die or live. His prayer was Christ to be honored in his body. Phillipians must have prayed for the release of Paul from the prison.

Of course, we can pray to be better in our troubles. But deeper prayer can be “Christ may be honored in all our trials.” It is because we know that God works for the good of us in all things (good and bad things) – Romans 8:28.

Another meaning of “deliverance” for Paul is: to be delivered from his fear, despair, and weakness. Paul wanted to be empowered and to keep his faith so that he could honor Christ in his body. In all of his letters, Paul always asked his coworkers’ prayer support for him. He humbly depended on others’ prayer support instead of taking matters on his own hands.

In Jesus Christ, arguably, our prayer can be more powerful than prayers in the Old Testament because Jesus taught the power of the believers’ prayers in his name. **John 14:12-14 reads “12Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. 13Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”**

Arguably, in Jesus Christ the power of prayer is more powerful than the prayer of people of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament priests’ prayers and prayers in the temple is emphasized. Arguably, in the Old Testament period, not many people prayed compared to the number of prayers in the New Testament period. In NT period people directly pray in Jesus’ name. In NT prayer is more powerful because it is prayer in Jesus’ name.

**Acts 4:29-31   
29And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” 31And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.**

“Through your prayers” (v.19) shows that Philippians’ prayer support is the most powerful support for Paul far more than material support. Amazing truth.

Paul’s prayer “I will not be at all ashamed” (v.20) shows that he does not want to become fearful and to lose faith and become shameful.

When we face trials, sometimes we complain and become fearful and we become shameful. So we need to pray.

Through their prayers and the help of the Holy Spirit (19for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance)

20as 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 honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Whether by life or by death” – To Paul to live or die is not a big deal. Christ to be honored is the matter for him. If Christ is honored through his death he could gladly die. But if living honors Christ he would do it.

1. **What does Paul mean when he says: “to live is Christ”?(22) What does Paul mean by fruitful labor? (24-26) What could be a practical example of fruitful labor? Why should we focus on fruitful labor?**
2. **What does Paul mean when he says: “to live is Christ”? (22)**

It means Christ lives in him. He was ruled by Christ. Galatians 2:20a “20I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

It means Paul lives for Christ only. So it was as if Paul did not exist but only Christ was revealed through Paul’s body.

1. **What does Paul mean by fruitful labor? (24-26)**

It means for the Philippians’ progress and joy in the faith. It is for their spiritual growth.

1. **What could be a practical example of fruitful labor?**

Prayer and preaching the gospel to others and defending the gospel.

1. **Why should we focus on fruitful labor?**

We should not waste our labor. When we give our labor for the progress and joy in the faith of our bible students or others our labor can be fruitful labor.

We should not focus on something else or waste our time and energy other than fruitful labor.

1. **Why does Paul say” to die is gain”? (23) Paul says “to live is Christ and to die is gain” How might we benefit from having this simple attitude towards life and death like Paul? How can we adopt this attitude?**
2. **Why does Paul say ”to die is gain”? (23)**

It is gain because he would be with Christ.

1. **Paul says “to live is Christ and to die is gain” How might we benefit from having this simple attitude towards life and death like Paul?**

“To live is Christ” means “to live for Christ only” and “to die is gain” means “We will be with Christ.”

1. **How can we adopt this attitude?**

When we are filled with the Holy Spirit and the word of God, we can adopt the same attitude.

We need to identify ourselves with Christ. When Christ died for our sins and we died to our sins. When he rose again we rose to serve God.

“24He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.” (1 Peter 2:24)

Remembering God’s grace upon us will lead us to live or die for Christ.

**Additional notes from questions 3 & 4. Verses 21-23**

**21For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.**

“Far better” means “very very good with excitement” in original Greek meaning. To Paul to be with Christ is such gain although it means “death”.

**Extra question: What can we learn from Paul?**

Paul’s heart was full of vison and hope. To him things of this world is not desirable. One pastor experienced physical death. In heaven, he saw all glory of heaven. Though he was a pastor, he did not believe the goodness of the kingdom of God. He did not know the glory of the kingdom of God. But now after his death he saw the glory of heaven and he even met Jesus. Jesus showed him all the glory of heaven. Jesus even showed him hell. Jesus told him “Now you go back to earth and preach the kingdom of God”. Then he felt so sad because he had to go back to earth. So he said, “No, Lord, I do not want to go back.” But Jesus told him, “You have to go back to earth. Later, you can come back again.” Then he woke up, and he found himself in the hospital. All of his family members cried out of joy. He also cried but out of great sorrow.

When one missionary was young, the kingdom of God seems far away. As he grew more the vision of the kingdom of God grows more. Then the desire for this world becomes weak and the desire for the kingdom of God grow more in his heart.

We Christians have this great hope for the kingdom of God. But unbelievers do not know it. So they cherish money more as they become older. One man was very rich. He had many apartment buildings and properties. Throughout his marriage life he did not allow his wife to buy new clothes at all. He did not go out for eating. He was very stingy. He always eat at home in humble meals even in the days of birthday or marriage anniversary. He saved all the money because his hope was in money. But Paul was different. His desire was to depart this world and be with Christ.

“For to me to live is Christ”. What does it mean? Christ may be revealed through his life. Christ may be the source of his life. His life may be led by Christ. He lived, but actually Christ lived in him. One singly purpose of Paul’s life is that Christ may be honored.

“To die is gain” because he will be with Christ. V.23b “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.” To many people, “death” is the great loss. When one dies he loses everything including all of his/her monies. But to believers, “death” is great gain not losing. We need this kind of perspective.

22If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Fruitful labor means “salvation” for others. Christians’ life on earth is to do fruitful labor for others.

To Paul both (to live or die) was good. To Christians both to live or die is good. To live in the world is good even though there are suffering because we do fruitful labor. We Christians have the great hope in the kingdom of God. That does not mean we hate our life here on earth. Our life here on earth has great value before God because we do fruitful labor.

Life without Christ is cursed life. Going back to heaven, our true home, is also good. So we Christians are between two good places. This is Christians’ perspective of life and death. Life is fruitful labor, and death is the great gain. Ordinary people’s view of good life is ‘not to work but just take rest’.

George Whitefield, one of great preachers in England, preached the gospel message until one day before he died. Usually, he preached the gospel from morning to evening. One day he traveled and preached the gospel. After dinner he went to his room to take rest. And he died. He poured all his energy and strength to preach the gospel. He traveled a lot. He preached on streets and churches. Benjamin Frankline, one of America’s founding fathers, became a believer through George Whitefield’s preaching. Benjamin did not like offering to church. But he was curious about George Whitefield when he heard him preaching. So he went to listen to him. Then at that day he offered all the money he had that day, and he said something along the line “I left that place giving all the money I have.”

1. **How is Paul living like Christ for the Philippians? (24-26) How can we mimic this example in our lives towards others?**
   1. **How is Paul living like Christ for the Philippians? (24-26)**

**“24But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 25Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.”**

By praying for the Philippians and choose what he would do for the benefit of Philippians.

“But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.” - Paul might want to retire. But because of their necessity he would remain.

“so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus.” They would glory in Christ Jesus amply. Our necessary is for others. On earth is the place for our fruitful labor. It is our place to work. We need to find our necessity in Jesus Christ on earth.

* 1. **How can we mimic this example in our lives towards others?**

Our necessity on earth is a lot because people really need a lof of our fruitful labor.

We don’t want to just survive. We want to have clear necessity for our life. Missionary Livingston in Africa said something like, “God’s servant never dies until his mission is accomplished”. He meant if there is necessity of a missionary he cannot die.

“Through your prayer” – each nation and the world and church and children and bible students need prayer for their salvation. So many Christian services are needed here and there. For that purposes, Christians should live longer.

Monica (mother of Augustine) prayed for his son Augustine many years and a great man was born when he was 31 years old. The purpose of Christians life here on earth is to pray for others. And the prayer is a part of fruitful labor.

1. **What do you think it means to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? Paul encourages the Phillipians to “stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”, what do you think this type of life could look like? What is a clear sign of the Philippian’s salvation?(28) How can we live this way?**
2. **What do you think it means to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ?**

“standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28and not frightened in anything by your opponents” (v.27b-28a)

1. **Paul encourages the Phillipians to “stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”, what do you think this type of life could look like?**

This was how Paul lived fully focusing on Christ, thinking about how to honor Christ in his body.

1. **What is a clear sign of the Philippian’s salvation? (28)**

Their conflict and suffering because of Christ and his gospel.

1. **How can we live this way?**

By living Christ-centered life. By being united with Christ. By taking Christ’s interests and concern and suffering be ours. By believing his glory will be ours when his power is fully revealed as **Php 3:21 says “who will transform our lowly body to be like his gloriouis body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself,”**

**Additional Note for question 6**

**V27-28.**

**27Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.**

V. 27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ - It means to live a life that matches the gospel of Christ. Living a life that is worthy of the gospel of Christ. The life that reflects the gospel of Christ.

“The gospel of Christ” is his death and resurrection. “Through his death” we died to ourselves and our sin cutting. So it means we repent all of our sins and cut them off, and live like Jesus according to his image.

“Through his resurrection” Jesus gave us the hope of the kingdom of God and the vision of resurrection.

“Worthy of the gospel of Christ” means to live with Jesus’ image (live a holy life) and live with the hope of the kingdom of God. But many even Christians may not live a worthy of the gospel. Then they cannot live standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

Why did Philippians had a division among them? It is because they were still ruled by their pride and selfish ambition and sinful desires. When everybody lives worthy of the gospel they can stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened.

28and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

To live a life worthy of the gospel is a clear sign to unbelievers. Our holy life gives a clear message that those who live sinful life will be judged.

If Christians do not live worthy of the gospel they cannot give clear messages to the world. If the manner of Christians’ life is not worthy of the gospel they cannot deliver such clear messages to the world.

Early Christians live such a holy life. So their influence was powerful although many became martyrs.

1. **What does Paul say is part of the package of believing in Christ? Why might this come as a surprise to some? Why might it actually be a blessing for us to suffer for Christ’s sake and engage in the same conflicts that Paul had?**
2. **What does Paul say is part of the package of believing in Christ?**

To suffer for Christ’s sake. We want only salvation from Christ by believing in him. But it is granted to us that we also should suffer for his sake. Christ himself not only believed in his God but also he suffered for his Father’s sake by obeying his command.

1. **Why might this come as a surprise to some?**

Since “gospel” means “good news of great joy” people may never imagine it includes suffering for the sake of Christ. By nature we sinners do not like suffering. We are selfish. We want benefit of salvation only but not suffering for his sake. But suffering for his sake is the essential part of salvation. There cannot be separation between believing in Jesus and suffering for his sake. We live with Christ through the death with Christ.

For all believers who are saved are in Christ will suffer for Christ’s sake. Jesus said in **John 15:18-21**

**18“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. 21But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me.**

1. **Why might it actually be a blessing for us to suffer for Christ’s sake and engage in the same conflicts that Paul had?**

Suffering for Christ’s sake will be a blessing for us in many ways. First, it will fulfill the will of God for us. God’s will for us is to be like Christ. (Romans 8:29) Second, suffering for Christ is the evidence that we are children of God and we will inherit together with Christ. Third, the reward and glory that comes from suffering far outweighs our suffering and it will increase our patience. (Romans 8:18-25) Therefore those who want greater reward and glory from God should desire to suffer more for Chris like Paul (Php 3:12-13) Fourth, suffering for Christ is the way for us to experience the power of Christ resurrection. (Php 3:10-11) Fifth, suffering for Christ opens the door for us to experience the love of Christ for us and live as more than conquers. (Romans 8:37)

Surely to suffer is gain.

**V29-30.**

**29For 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, 30engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.**

Paul encouraged the Philippians to engage in the same conflict Paul had. Paul almost died four times in his sufferings. Paul still had the conflict even when he wrote a letter to them.

Philippians were sad to see Paul’s suffering and conflict. But Paul was saying “I want you to have the same conflict that I had and I have now”. It is not easy to say it to them. But he said it.

One pastor suffered so much during his life time as a pastor. His church never grew more than 50 people. His church members always had many conflicts. So he had to offer fasting prayers so many times. One day another conflict among his church people arose. So he went to offer fasting prayer. But he died in the mist of fasting prayer. He had one son. After his father’s death his son was so surprised to see that his mother kept telling him “you need to serve the Lord” when he was making a good money and was happy. He was never be able to understand his mother because his mother saw how much her husband suffered. And how could she ask his own son to go in the way of same suffering? Amazingly the son became a pastor later. His church was prosperous miraculously. Then he knew it was the result of his father’s prayer. Now he understood his mother who asked him to live such a life of suffering. He now know the power of prayer his father offered for him.

The mother of one missionary prayed for her son when he went to a mission field. “Lord, let my son suffer and die for Christ” although her son was scared. The Lord used UBF ministry to encourage others to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Not only believing in him but also suffer for Christ is important. Through this we can experience Christ’s power. Suffering brings fruitful labor to save others. Real Christian life is to live worthy of the gospel of Christ, and it includes the life to suffer for Christ.

The end.