

# Philippians 1:21-24

*To Live: Christ, To Die: Gain*

HHBC



HOLLY HILLS BIBLE CHURCH  
February 25, 2024

*18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.*

*Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.*

*21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.*





## 21. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

### “To Live is Christ”:

- To Live is an infinitive: present, active voice: ‘to be living in the present’: is Christ
- **IS:** a status quo essence verb, a statement of reality for Paul
- ‘to live is’: to live is a status quo essence of my being: CHRIST
- More amplification: *‘my status quo essence of being is a Person’*
- And as we say often: the Christian life is a Person, and this is the proof of this aphorism
- This is a really big aspiration for all of us, but God wants us pursuing this goal
- Even Paul was pressing on to his own goal, and realizing he wasn’t done yet in its attainment:
- Philippians Chapter 3:

10 THAT I MAY KNOW HIM AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS, BEING CONFORMED TO HIS DEATH; 11 IN ORDER THAT I MAY ATTAIN TO THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD.

12 NOT THAT I HAVE ALREADY OBTAINED IT OR HAVE ALREADY BECOME PERFECT, BUT I PRESS ON SO THAT I MAY LAY HOLD OF THAT FOR WHICH ALSO I WAS LAID HOLD OF BY CHRIST JESUS. 13 BRETHREN, I DO NOT REGARD MYSELF AS HAVING LAID HOLD OF IT YET; BUT ONE THING I DO: FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND AND REACHING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD, 14 I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL FOR THE PRIZE OF THE UPWARD CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.



## 21. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

### TO LIVE IS CHRIST: and Why it is to be so / Proofs from Paul's perspective:

- 'To Live is Christ': a mission statement for the believer.
- The strategy to accomplish the mission statement: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me."* Gal. 2:20
- More from Paul in Phil. 3: (7-8)

*But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,*



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### TO LIVE IS CHRIST: and Why it is to be so / Proofs from Paul's perspective:

'life' used here and in John's Gospel (as to eternal life) is:

**zōē**: of the absolute fullness of life, both essential and ethical, which belongs to God, and through him both to the hypostatic LOGOS and to Christ

The **SOURCE** of all **zōē** life is Christ Himself:

- *In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.* Jn 1:4
- 'Jesus \*said to him, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."** Jn 14:6
- **"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.** Jn 17:3
- *For by Him all things (INCLUDE: life here) were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities— all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.* Col. 1:16,17
- For you died, and your **life is hidden with Christ in God.** When **Christ who is our life** appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col 1: 3,4)



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## TO LIVE IS CHRIST: and Why it is to be so / Proofs from Paul's perspective:

### How can this be accomplished?

- 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld [*theaomai*] his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.'
- "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds (*theōreō*) the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." Jn 6:40

**Theōreō:** to be a spectator of; view/ look at attentively; take a view of; survey; consider with the mind; find out by seeing; contemplate;

*Often used as in conjunction with public shows (public games, sacrifices etc.) - blueletterbible; Thayer's*

### By Beholding Him directly!

**And most certainly:** through the Word, II Cor. 3:18, gazing in the mirror, the Word, is a different 'behold' in Greek, more indirect, but you see His glory and it changes you.

Further: knowing that you've been baptized into His death, burial & resurrection and are free from the flesh to live in the spirit and with Him directly here and now . . . Rom. 6



## 21. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

**And: TO DIE IS GAIN: and how can this be so? / Proofs from Paul's perspective:**

- **GAIN** (advantage; even lucre): *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.”* I Thes 4: 14
- **GAIN**: *“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”* II Cor 5:1
- **GAIN**: *“For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,”* II Cor 5:2 (The gain here is no more groaning!!)
- **GAIN**: *“For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life!” (zōē). “Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge”* II Cor 5:4,5
- **GAIN**: *“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight— we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.”* II Cor. 5:6-8
- **GAIN**: *And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.” Rev. 14:13*



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### TO DIE IS GAIN: and how can this be so? / Proofs from Paul's perspective:

- **GAIN:** *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”* 1 Cor. 15:20 (He is our First Fruits of our resurrection) . . . *“after that those who are Christ’s at His coming”* (v.23)
- **GAIN:** *“There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory-”*

**“So also is the resurrection of the dead.** It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, **it is raised in glory**; it is sown in weakness, **it is raised in power**; it is sown a natural body, **it is raised a spiritual body**. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.” (1 Cor 15 vs. 40-44)

- **BIG GAIN:** *“But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, **“DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?”** 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (vs. 54-57)*
- **ULTIMATE GAIN:** *“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”* 1 Jn 3:2





22. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.

**After personally presenting his great: ‘To Live is Chist, to die is gain’ aphorism/ maxim:**

- a. Paul returns to the earthly scene from the maxim’s wonderful heavenly focus and scene . . .
- b. We are now back to Earth!
- c. Paul’s Circumstance: a review of the last few weeks: he was in prison in Rome, but possibly at a Roman consulate closer to Macedonia; possibly chained to a Praetorian guard night and day; squalid conditions; darkness perhaps; little food . . .
- d. Paul doesn’t know which way to ‘vote’ on living or dying: *haireō*

But: notice . . . Do you hear Paul complaining in the least? Wishing for better circumstances? No, he is content where God has placed him. Both V. Peterman and J.D. McCulley do a nice job in exploring this [HOLLYHILLSBIBLECHURCH.ORG/MESSAGES&AUDIO/ARCHIVED SERIES / PHILIPPIANS 2003 & 2012]

**Think of Paul’s fruitful labor:** church planting or ministries to: *Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonica, Colossae, the churches in Galatia, Athens, Berea, Derbe, Lystra, Laodicea, 3 missionary journeys, defense of the gospel throughout, likely the treatise to the Hebrew believers . . . etc., etc.*

**Amidst all hardships to the above:** *beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, dangers from: rivers, bandits, fellow Jews, gentiles, snakes, his ‘thorn in the flesh’ etc. . . . [II Cor 11:23-28]*



**23. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;**

**”But I am hard-pressed from both directions”**

- a. Of note: both directions, both ‘choices’ Paul is to vote for are: **POSITIVE!** 1. Paul’s desire to stay in the flesh for the benefit of his spiritual children, and continue in fruitful work, 2. Paul’s desire to be taken home [again, J.D. McCulley brings this out his lesson in 2013]
- b. He’s not stuck between a rock and a hard place; in his case, he’s stuck between a sapphire and a diamond (but nonetheless, two hard surfaces!)
- c. **“*I am in a strait betwixt the two*” is the KJV. . .**
- d. Again, his mind is troubled, not in dire straits, but in between 2 wonderful straits for him
- e. Hard-pressed = ***synechō*** has the shade of being in a mental pickle
- f. Vern Peterman: noted that the Roman streets were very narrow straits, so the walls on each side could be imposing

**“. . . Having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;**”

- I. Paul literally has a lust for, a craving for going to be with Christ: ***epithymeō***
- II. To depart: ***analyō*** – to unloose as threads; or strike camp; pull up the tent stakes and break camp
- III. Compare to: II Cor 5:4 ***For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened...*** So pull up your tent stakes and leave Camp Earth for your heavenly home!



## 24. yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

1. You notice that Paul's tone seems to be questioning whether this imprisonment might be the end for him, his language is that of a man who doesn't know whether he'll be spared
2. He is spared, he has one more imprisonment to go—
3. In II Timothy, the tone of that letter he is certain he is at his end: *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.* II Tim. 4:6-8
  - a) **Still, even more GAIN** in dying here!
4. 'to remain in the flesh' - **epimenō**, or 'to abide in the flesh', is a good thing . . .
5. **WAIT A MINUTE! What???**
6. There is *flesh* and there is **THE** flesh, and in this case it's simply, it is necessary that I stay at camp in my tent, to tent among you guys for now. . . .
7. What is the necessity for the Philippians?
  - a) I would supply **growth**— it is necessary that Paul keeps them growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Any other thoughts here?