

Though imprisoned, the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi with joy in the Lord. As he looked at his life and to the future, he could say with confidence that his life was Christ and, as a logical consequence, to die would be gain. This is the perspective that is needed today, to live each day and to look to the future.

I. *How Christ can be our life:*

1. *We are linked with Christ.*

Paul was changed from a persecuting Pharisee, when Jesus confronted him on the way to Damascus (Acts 9). In those events God opened Paul's eyes and he entered into a relationship with Jesus Christ, for whom and to whom he dedicated his life (Gal 1:15–16; 1 Cor 2:2; Phil 3:7–9). Our lives, too, must be linked to Christ, that our being and destiny is joined to Him.

2. *We have life in Christ.*

For Paul only Christ could give real life. Of himself he was a “wretched man” (Rom 7:24). Daily communion through His Word, by His grace, was essential.

3. *We have love for Christ.*

For Paul the love of Christ was essential: to love Christ and to know His love (Eph 3:17–19). It moved him to preach (2 Cor 5:8–15) and defined relationships within the church (cf. 1 Cor 1:13; 5:7; 6:11; Eph 5:22, 25; 6:1; Col 3:13; 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 2:5).

4. *We have likeness to Christ.*

When life is Christ it means becoming like Him (cf. 2 Cor 2:15; Gal 5:22–23), which is God's perfect goal for the believer (1 John 3:2). It means for us now developing a servant's heart, developing a loving heart, and having a humble heart.

II. *How death can be our gain:*

1. *What Paul leaves behind*

- a. He would leave behind beloved brethren, communion with believers on earth, his beloved Timothy and friend Silas.
- b. He also would leave behind things best left behind:
 - 1) the body of sin and death (Rom 7:14b–15),
 - 2) a life of labor and sorrow (cf. 2 Cor 11:23–28), and
 - 3) a life of temptation, Satan's attacks, and his “thorn in the flesh”.

2. *What Paul receives at death*

- a. In dying the believer ...
 - 1) can have communion with Christ's sufferings (Phil 3:10),
 - 2) can experience His grace,
 - 3) can be renewed inwardly (2 Cor 4:16),
 - 4) can witness for Christ's glory, and
 - 5) will enter into Christ's presence.
- b. After death the believer will have ...
 - 1) perfect eternal life with Christ (John 14:19),
 - 2) perfect knowledge of Christ (1 Cor 13:12),
 - 3) perfect activities such as worship, service, and fellowship (Hebr 12:23; Rev 15:2–3; 7:15; Matt 8:11),
 - 4) a perfect home (Psalm 16:11, and
 - 5) perfect communion with the triune God.

Death does more for the believer than anything this earthly life can offer. Death apart from Christ means eternal separation from God, eternal punishment, but the child of God need not fear death.

Paul saw purpose for continued living here on earth, but was ready to die because for him it was gain. So also the believer today should live for Christ and to see the gain which death brings.

Questions for further reflection:

- Are you certain of your relationship to God through Jesus Christ? What are you trusting to be right with God?
- What might be distracting you from being able to say, “to live ... Christ!”? Is your life defined by your work, possessions, family, ... or by Christ?
- Can you view death as gain? Can you approach death beyond the grave with peaceful confidence and joy? Why/why not? If not, what would help?