

Men's Table Talk on Philippians 1

Philippians 1:21 says, “*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” Most people focus on the second part of the verse, “*to die is gain,*” and contemplate the joys of heaven. But we should not overlook what comes before. The importance of the phrase “to live is Christ” cannot be overstated. This Paul wrote: Romans 10:9 “*If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*”

Paul and Timothy, Christ Jesus' slaves, to the overseers, and all ministers of those made holy in Christ Jesus in Philippi: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God with joy every time I think of you and whenever I pray for you all, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Of this I am confident, that he who began a good work in you will continue it until the day of Jesus Christ. It is only natural for me to feel this way concerning you, for I hold you in my heart because of our fellowship in God's grace, both in my imprisonment and in my defense and confirmation of the gospel. God is my witness, how I long for all of you with Christ Jesus' own yearning. I pray that your love for each other may increase with more and more perception and depth so that you may be able to discern the excellent. Thereby you may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, yielding an abundant righteous harvest through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Beloved, I want you to understand that what has happened to me has actually helped to further the gospel. It has become widely known throughout the entire Praetorian Guard and imperial palace, that my imprisonment is for Christ; and my imprisonment has given my fellow-believers confidence in the Lord to speak, abundantly and fearlessly, the word.

Now, some proclaim Christ in a spirit of rivalry and jealousy, but others in goodwill. The latter, out of love, proclaim Christ. They know that I have been put here to defend the gospel; the others proclaim Christ from selfish ambition with mixed intentions and cause me distress in my imprisonment. Oh, what does it matter? One way or another Christ is proclaimed, whether sincerely or not; for that I rejoice.

Yes, I will continue to rejoice! I know that through your prayers, and the provision of Jesus Christ's Spirit, all of this will turn out for my deliverance. It is my confident hope and expectation not to be embarrassed, but to have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be highly praised through my body, whether by my life or by my death.

To me: life is Christ and death is improvement. If I am to go on living in the flesh there is a fruitful work for me to do. Which then am I to prefer? I am torn between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ (which is better by far), but for your sake the need is for me to remain in the flesh. I am convinced of this: I will remain and continue to be with you to insure your advancement in joy and in faith, so that your rejoicing in Jesus Christ may be more abundant for my coming to you again. Whatever, live your life in a manner worthy of Christ's gospel, so that, whether I come to see you or not I may hear that you are standing firm, united in spirit and mind, working together for the gospel faith - in no way intimidated by your opponents. This makes it evident to them of their destruction and your salvation. This is of God, who has graciously granted to you the privilege of faith in Christ as well as suffering for him. Your conflict is the same as what you witness in me and hear that I continue to endure.