

In Christ, All is Gain Philippians 1:21-30

Let me encourage you to have your Bible ready each time that we gather our hearts together for "It's a Good Life." Today we're going to look in Philippians chapter 1, and I encourage you to read it. We're not going to read all of these verses, but we're going to read some of them, Philippians 1, verses 21-30, is the section we're in today.

Paul was living in the very foothills of heaven. As he wrote this, we really need to understand, within a couple of years... whether Paul knew this or not... I believe the Lord imparted things to Paul that possibly you and I don't have. Now, God is no respecter of persons, but I believe that there are some things that He let Paul know, and within a couple of years, Paul would go home to be with the Lord. He would be sacrificed, and he would have his head cut off.

But here in this section of Scripture, we see a real conflict in his heart... the desire to depart from this present life and to be with Christ, which is far better, according to verse 23 that he wrote. The need to remain with much unfinished business that was calling for his attention.

Now in verse 21 of Philippians chapter 1, it says, *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Whether or not I live or die, he's saying here, it's all right with me because any way it goes I'm a winner....²²*But if I live in the flesh, this the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.*²³*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.* And he goes on in verse 24 and says this: *Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.*

He indicates here a happy escape from his dilemma and exclaims, *For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Prison or paradise for Paul, either alternative if approved of God is profitable.. Both are covered

by adequate assurances revealed in the context, and we need to look at that today.

First, to remain is profitable. *For to me to live is Christ...* Paul says in verse 21. To live is to serve the cause of Christ. My life today is an extension of the life of Christ. I am to put forth in what I do so that other people can see the things I do as a representative of Christ. Paul says to live is to serve the cause of Christ. My life is an extension of the life of Christ, according to Galatians 2:20. *Christ liveth in me.* In Romans 12:1, it says, *Present your bodies a living sacrifice...* Christ gave His body. He doesn't ask us to lay our lives down. Now, some will and some have laid their bodies down and given their lives for Christ. We know that as we study the life of Paul how he gave his life for the cause of Christ eventually, but Christ today asks us to present our bodies a *living sacrifice.* He wants us to be alive so that we can serve Him and help other people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus.

First Corinthians 3:16 says, *Ye are the temple of God.* We are the temple. We are not going about just making believe that Christ lives in us and that we are the temple of God, but we do have Christ living within us. It's not an imitation. My life is a participation in the life of Christ, not just an imitation. John 15:5 says, *I am the vine, ye are the branches.* Jesus is the vine. We are the branches. We are alive because of Jesus Christ.

To live is not only to serve the cause of Christ, but to live is to serve Christ's people. Paul knew this. It's to the furtherance of their faith. Paul says in verse 25 of Philippians chapter 1, *And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.* He was living to the furtherance of their faith. In other words, when people see us, as they saw Paul, they become encouraged and their faith grows

stronger. Now, we know that by reading the Word of God our faith grows, but as we look to other Christians, we draw strength from them and it helps us to understand that we need to keep on keeping on.

It was also, according to Paul, to the increase of their joy, and what a homecoming it's going to be one day when we see Jesus face to face and we see those people who have gone on before us, those people who have been an influence on our lives. What a homecoming it's going to be and what joy it's going to be. But there's joy today when we look to those people who have helped us in the past, those people who have helped us to understand that we need Jesus Christ in our life.

Verse 26 of Philippians 1 says, *That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.* When we visit those individuals who have been prominent in our Christian lives, what a blessing it is not only to us, but it is a blessing to them that we are keeping on keeping on, that we are serving our Lord.

Paul gives the indication to live is to prolong the privilege of witnessing and suffering for Christ, and in verse 29, Paul speaks of suffering for Christ as a gift. Verse 29 says, *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.*

Once again, all of us will not give our lives for the Lord. We will not all suffer to the extent that Paul did, but some will. Some have and some do today suffer for the cause of Christ. But Paul speaks of suffering for Christ as a gift. In Acts chapter 5 and verse 41, it talks about Peter and his brethren. They were brutally beaten, but the result was that they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ. Could I do that? I don't know. I won't know until or unless I am faced with that, but praise God, I can look back to the testimony of these New Testament and Old Testament saints as they gave their lives and their bodies to the back of

the smiters, those who whipped them with the whips. And I can look to those people today who are suffering for the cause of Christ, and I can only pray that I would be as strong as they are and they were in my life for Christ.

In another instance, Paul declares this: *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake,* II Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 10.

A crippled newsboy in the spirit of Christmas decorated his crutches with holly leaves. As he happily made his rounds on his decorated crutches, he evidenced the joy. In other words, he showed a joy that the world could not give and adverse circumstances could not take away. And such was the spirit of Paul under persecution. No matter what happened, his joy was full because he was serving Christ. He says in verse 21 to depart is profitable. In other words, to die is gain, not that death would be an easy way out of a hard situation. Paul was not one to take the line of least resistance. Acts chapter 24 and verses 5, 14-16, and 25 talk about this.

And then we see that Paul was not taking the morbid view of one who is weary, disillusioned, discouraged, and ready to quit. In Galatians chapter 6 and verse 9, it says, *And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.* Keep on going. Keep on keeping on. He didn't take the morbid view of one who is weary, disillusioned and discouraged, and ready to quit.

And then we see not as death was an end of life but as an incident along the way of everlasting life. John 3:36 says, *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.*

And then we are assured that death does not end all. Neither does it bring an uncommitted life to a happy ending. I have been called upon in the past as a pastor from time to time to preach funerals of

people who were not saved. On occasion, the family has asked for songs of faith such as *Beautiful Isle of Somewhere*. But there is no beautiful Isle of Somewhere from which God has been left out. It's not that death is a punishment but as the opening of the door unto God's great upper room Paul is looking at here, but for those who have never trusted Jesus as Savior, that door is not there. The door that is waiting for them is Jesus Himself. He says, *I am the door*. He says, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*. And if you want to go to that beautiful Isle of Somewhere someday, you need to trust Jesus Christ today.

Paul, in this section of Scripture that we're looking at today, did not look at death as punishment but as an opening of a door into God's great upper room. The psalmist by divine inspiration declared, *Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints*.

Do you know Christ today as your Savior? Have you trusted Him? If you've trusted Him today, you need to realize that in Christ all is gain. To live is Christ. To die is gain because we will be with the Lord.

If you've never trusted the Lord as your Savior today, why not bow your head where you are right now and say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart. I want you as my Savior."

And if you are saved today, live for Him. Let Him lead, guide, and direct your path.

Well, it's been good being with you today, and I trust that you'll take these verses to heart today. Let God speak to your heart and help you.

Why not look at our Website, www.LRWM.org. On the Website, you'll be able to download this program and other programs of "It's a Good Life." You'll also be able to download free of charge a transcript of this program and other programs of

"It's a Good Life." You'll find Bible study helps there.

You can also write to me: Lewis Woodard, 497 Judith Avenue, Fruitland Park, FL 34731. I'll be glad to send you a transcript of this program and other programs of "It's a Good Life" free of charge.

Until the next time when you hear me say, "It's a good life," may the Lord bless you richly is my prayer.