

# Life is Christ

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Preacher: Rev Angus Macrae

- [ 0 : 00 ]     May God help each one of us as we listen to his voice speaking to us now. It would be good to turn to Philippians chapter 1 to read together in Philippians 1.
- And maybe taking up the reading just at the end of verse 18 and the beginning of verse 19 where we read these words. Paul in prison, thankful that Christ is being preached among the Philippians.
- Yes, he says, and I will rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance.
- The praying on his behalf while he's in prison will turn out for his deliverance, for his salvation. As 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.
- For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. The Lord Jesus gave some very, very clear warnings to his own followers.
- [ 1 : 30 ]     And you read especially in the Gospel of John some of these warnings. And Jesus told his disciples about the reality of Satan.
- About the reality of an evil being, an evil intelligence that wishes to destroy us. To destroy our lives. To destroy our usefulness.
- To destroy our bodies. To destroy our health. To destroy our minds. To destroy our souls. To destroy our souls. He is the father of lies.
- Jesus says that when he speaks lies, he speaks his own native language. And that he's been a liar from the beginning. That's the way the devil operates.
- And Paul, when he reflects on the work of our spiritual enemy. Who wants you dead. Who wants you in hell. Paul uses slightly different language.
- [ 2 : 32 ]     But he's agreeing with Jesus, the master. Paul says the devil wants to blind you. The devil wants to put a veil over your eyes.
- So that you will not see Jesus Christ. And his lovely beauty. And the beauty of the Gospel. And so I want to begin tonight. By asking.
- That each one of us will pray. Even if we don't normally pray. That we will pray right now. Especially if you're not yet a follower of Jesus.
- That you will pray right now. Lord let me hear you tonight. And let me see you tonight. And don't allow the devil to blind me.
- Or to lie to me. Will you pray? Because what could be more important. Than to see Jesus. And to see salvation.
- [ 3 : 33 ]     And what life is really all about. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4. That the God of this world. And he means Satan.
- Has blinded the eyes of men and women. Veiling their eyes. So that they will not see the light. Of the glorious Gospel of Christ. God knows.

And the Christian folk here know. That the most beautiful thing. In all creation. The most beautiful thing. In all history.

Is to see. Jesus. And to love him. To know him. And to appreciate him. But it takes.

The work of God. By his Holy Spirit. It takes the work. Of God's grace. To enable us. To see. When the God of this world.

[ 4 : 32 ] Who hates God. Who hates you. Is constantly. Throwing things in your eyes. To stop you seeing. We're so busy. I myself.

Going about. The work of ministry. Being paid. By the church. To go about. The work of ministry. I can take my eyes. I can take my eyes. Off Jesus. And take my eyes.

Off what is important. And be taken up. With work. Or work. For the wrong reason. And for the wrong motive. That's true. Of every gospel.

Minister. It's true. Of every office bearer. It's true. Of every Christian. We can take our eyes. Off. The most beautiful. Thing. That exists. God's son.

God's son. And his love. And his atoning sacrifice. For sin. His death. And his resurrection.

[ 5 : 27 ] When did we last. Feel moved. When we read the word of God. When did we last.

Weep. When we were. Speaking to someone. About Jesus. And his salvation. When did we last. Come away.

From a conversation. With someone. And feel. I have to. I must pray. For that person. Right now. Before I pick up. My phone. Or before I.

Look at my day's work. Or before I go. To the shops. Or read an email. Or whatever. Seems so important. Satan.

Would love us. To be busy. But never to look. At God's son. Satan. Would love us. To be. Angry.

[ 6 : 21 ] Or occupied. Preoccupied. With all kinds of things. And forget. To look. At the cross. And the son of God's love.

And here's Paul. In prison. But he wants us. To look. Steadily. With a razor like. Focus. On Jesus.

He says to me. To live as Christ. My whole life. Is about Christ. And because. My life. Is about Christ. Even. The way I die. I want it.

To be about Christ. I want it. To glorify him. I want it. To praise him. To me. To live as Christ. And to die. Is more Christ. It's. It's to gain. More of Jesus. Everything.

Is Christ. What a wonderful. Way to live. Life. But Paul. Should not. Be the exception. He should be. One of our teachers. One of our.

[ 7 : 21 ] Models. For what the ordinary. Christian life. Looks like. Two or three things. Tonight. First of all. Focus. On Christ.

And do that. Whatever your circumstances. Focus on Christ. And secondly. Focus on Christ. As your reason. For life.

And finally. Focus on Christ. For your eternal. Future. Focus on Christ. Whatever is happening.

Whatever your circumstances. That's where we begin. Well I've never been in prison. You'll be glad to hear. Maybe. Maybe the day will come.

Our country is changing. And who knows. And maybe. I'll come a cropper. And do something. That deserves prison. Who knows. But Paul was in prison. For being a servant of Jesus.

- [ 8 : 21 ] Paul had not broken. The law of God. Or the law of man. And yet. Trouble followed him. And riots followed him. And imprisonment.
- And hardship. And beating. And lies. And accusations. Followed him. He had to be led away. By the Roman commander. Lysanius.
- And led. At night. By his friends. Out of Damascus. And he had many a danger. And many a scrape. And in the whole process. Of his interaction.
- With the Roman authorities. He faced. Trouble and danger. Appearing before. Felix and Agrippa. And other human authorities. And making his appeal.
- At last. To Caesar. And his perilous journey. To Rome. Eventually took him. To Caesar's palace. To imprisonment. Under the watch.
- [ 9 : 14 ] Of the. Praetorian guard. And in those two years. As he awaited his trial. He was witnessing. To the Roman guard. To those.
- Same ones. Who were. Responsible. For the life. And the safety. Of the emperor. Or they were hearing. About Jesus. And the gospel. From Paul. The prisoner. And what was he.
- Preoccupied with. When he was in prison. What was on his mind. I would be grumbling. I would be complaining. And if I was writing.
- A letter to a church. I would be saying. To that church. Come and visit me. Or I would be saying. To that church. Send me this. That or the other. That I need. To make this. Life in prison.
- More bearable. More tolerable. I would be saying. To them. Pray for my release. I would be saying. To them. Oh this is so unjust. And this is so unfair. I've done so much.
- [ 10 : 08 ] For the Lord. Why is this happening? I would be complaining. I would have a long list. I would be feeling. Very sorry for myself. But not Paul. Paul wants them.
- To pray. Confident. That the whole. Plan of God. Is being worked out. In his life. And so he says.
- Pray that I will. Not be ashamed. Of Jesus. Of Jesus. My master. Pray that I will be. In no way. Ashamed. And pray that the believers.
- Here in Rome. Will not be ashamed. And that the fact. I'm in prison. Or that I wear a chain. Or that I'm under guard. Will not put anybody. Off serving Jesus.
- Pray. That now. As always. I will be bold. To be the man. Who belongs to Jesus. And pray that the church here. Will be bold. To speak the word of Jesus.
- [ 11 : 01 ] I want people. Talking about Jesus. Some of them. Have dodgy motives. Some of them. Are preaching. Out of envy. Well. I'm glad they're preaching. I'm glad people.
- Are hearing about Jesus. Even if. Not everything. In the church. Is perfect. I'm glad. That the word. Is going out. Pray for me. That whatever my circumstances.
- I will not be ashamed. Of Jesus. I will keep. My focus. On Jesus. And whatever happens. It will work out.
- For. My. Deliverance. That's an interesting word. That he uses there. In verse 19. This will turn out.
- For my deliverance. I think. Paul is probably. Quoting. From the Old Testament. There. It's not in quotation marks. In the Bible.
- [ 11 : 58 ] Translations. It's not listed. In the footnote. Necessarily. As. A citation. From the Old Testament. But. The Greek. Language. Here. Is very. Very. Similar.
- To the Greek. Translation. Of the book of Job. There's a very. Ancient. Translation. Of. The Old Testament. From Hebrew. To Greek. It was. Really. The Greek.

Old Testament. Bible. Of the apostles. And of the generation. Of Jesus himself. It was. Translated. Between the two. Testaments. And. There's a quote.

There. From the book of Job. Chapter 13. Verse 16. And there. In the book of Job. With. Really. Identical. Language. To what Paul says. Here.

To the Philippians. We read. Job saying. Indeed. This. Will turn out. For my. For my. Deliverance. Or for my. Salvation.

[ 12 : 52 ] And then Job. Goes on. To say. For no. Godless. Person. Would dare. To come. Before him. Job's.

Very poor. Comforters. Were saying. To Job. You must. Be in the wrong. To be suffering. You must. Be in the wrong. To be in pain. You must.

Be out. Of the will. Of God. To be. In such distress. God. Must. Be punishing. You. God. Must. Have his hand. On you. And Job.

Is saying. No. I'll praise. In whatever. My circumstances. This. Will work. Out. For my. Deliverance. If I was. A wicked man.

Needing to repent. If I was. Covering up. My sin. I wouldn't. Dare. To appear. Before God. But when we. We pray. And we cry. To God.

[ 13 : 46 ] For help. And we say. By faith. This. Will turn out. For my salvation. This. Will turn out. For my deliverance. We can only do that.

As sinners. Who are standing. Under the blood. Of Jesus. Who are being. Accepted. And cleansed. And justified. Because they believe on.

They depend on. Jesus. And that was Paul. And that's how we need to be. That's what the Christian life. Needs to look like. For us. That we are focusing on Jesus.

And we're saying. My circumstances. Can be good or bad. He'll go on in this letter. To say in chapter 4. That he's learned to be content. He can. He can have lots.

He can have little. He can be full. He can be empty. He can do all things. Through Christ. He's learned this. And he can rejoice. In every circumstance. Because Christ is in him.

[ 14 : 44 ] And Christ is with him. And if he's got Christ. Well. He can do. Whatever. Comes. He can do it. Because of Christ.

The Lord. Will. Deliver him. He's not saying. I'll be released from prison. He's not saying. I live an old.

Long. Happy life. He's saying. Jesus is in control. He'll deliver me. The way he decides. And it will bring him glory.

So pray for me. That I will never be ashamed of him. And that the church. And the cause. Will not need to be ashamed of me. What a way to live.

That's how he says. For me. To live. Is Christ. So focus on Christ. Whatever your circumstances. Is God helping you to apply that to yourself.

[ 15 : 43 ] In some way. To the difficulties and challenges. That batter your faith. And batter your prayer life. Or that make it hard. To witness.

To people in your family. Focus on Christ. God bless you. As you do that. The second thing. Focus on Christ.

As your reason. For. Life. And we're. Coming here. To verses. 19. And 20. And 21.

I know. That through your prayers. Through the help of the spirit of Jesus. This will turn out for my deliverance. As it is my eager expectation. And hope. That I'll not be ashamed. But that with full courage.

Now as always. Christ will be honored. In my body. Whether by life. Or by death. For to me. To live. Is Christ. There are problems.

[ 16 : 40 ] And headaches. For the Bible translators. Whenever they're dealing with Paul. Because Paul. Can say a lot. With very few words. And of course. This letter was written down.

Or dictated in the Greek language. And none of us here. I imagine. Are very fluent in the Greek language. And some things don't easily translate. From one language to another.

So a lot of Bible translations. Are a bit wooden. If they translate every word. And every nuance. They just don't flow easily. There will be lots of.

Therefore. And for. And connective words. Some translations. Smooth it over. And don't put them all there. There. This is one of those passages.

Where it's all joined up. It's as if. If Paul. Had a. A thread. And he put a. A needle. And a thread together. And he wove.

[ 17 : 35 ] Out of one verse. Into the next verse. Into the next verse. A thread of. One thought. There's one big thought here. And the grammar. Shows that.

There are. Little connecting words. That don't always come into the English. Translation. So that verse 19. Runs into verse 20. Runs into verse 21. This. Great.

Statement. For me. To live as Christ. To die as gain. Is coming out. Of the verses. That come before it. Where he's talking about. The help of the Holy Spirit.

The help of their prayers. The enabling. The grace. That he's been given. The reason. He keeps living. As a Christian. Is that God.

Is using things. Like their prayers. And he feels it. And he knows it. And he senses it. And it helps him. It's so hard.

[ 18 : 28 ] To be a Christian. Who's alone. Or who's lonely. Or who's cut themselves off. Or withdrawn. From the fellowship of others. It's dangerous. Paul is.

Alone in prison. I suppose. People could visit him. But. Think how vulnerable he was. Not all the soldiers. Would have believed. What he said. Not all of them.

Would have taken it. Well. Some would have. Knocked him. And laughed at him. Maybe even given him. A good kick. But he's there. In prison. And he's kept going.

Because he knows. Out there. Are my friends. Who pray for me. There are the Philippians. Who pray for me. There's their minister. Epaphras. Who's come to see me. There. There are the gifts.

That they've sent me. To help me. We need. Help. Help. If we're going to live for Christ. And finish our days.

[ 19 : 22 ] And die for Christ. We need that help. So. The grammar shows you all these connections. It doesn't always come into English. So. So clearly. But the vocabulary.

The words that he picks too. The pictures that he makes. With his language. Also show a flow of thought. From one verse.

To the next verse. To the next verse. The idea of life and death. That are there. In that famous text. Verse 21.

For me to live as Christ. To die as gain. That is the gospel. Down to a few words. For me to live as Christ. To die as gain. But it's kind of an echo.

It's a partner. It's a mirror image of the verse. That comes before it. It's my hope that I'll not be ashamed. That I'll honor Christ in my body.

[ 20 : 23 ] Whether by life. Or whether by death. For me to live is Christ. To die is gain. So that the connections are being made.

By saying. In both these verses. I can do life. Through Christ. That's the only way I can do life. And I can do death.

Through Christ. I by faith. Can accept the death of a loved one. Through Christ. I by faith. I by faith. Can bury a child. Through Christ. I by faith. Can lose a dream. That I had for years.

And it wasn't in the will and plan of God. I can do that. I can do life. And I can do death. Through Christ.

[ 21 : 21 ] I can do. Accepting my own death. Mortality. Through Christ.

Many of us. Have had experiences. Where we have been tested. Or where a loved one has been tested. Maybe sometimes.

We look back on these experiences. And we don't like. How we were. Or how we performed. But Christ. Passed.

Every test. Every test. He never. Leaves us. He never. Forsakes us.

Even if we. Like Simon Peter. Leave him. Forsake him. His blood.

[ 22 : 21 ] Is over us. How good he is to us. Focus on Christ. Whatever your circumstances. Focus on Christ. As your reason for life.

So that in him. You can do life. And in him. You can do death. Paul comes back to this. Later in this letter. In chapter 3. Verse 7 and 8.

Where he says. That. Christ is the only thing. Worth having. He considers everything else. Rubbish. Dung. Just to be thrown away. Compared to.

The excellence. Of knowing Christ. Christ is the thing. That really matters. To know Christ. To gain Christ. Christ. And again. Paul is on the same wavelength.

As the Lord Jesus. His master. Because the Lord Jesus. Had taught his apostles. The same thing. In the parable. Of the pearl. Of great price. You'll read it. For example.

[ 23 : 16 ] In Matthew 13. The parables. Of the kingdom. There. Where Jesus. Is saying. In that parable. Are you prepared. To give up. Everything else. All that this world.

Offers. So long as you can still. Keep Christ. He's the pearl. Worth everything else. In your life. To have him.

To have Jesus. More precious. Than anything else. If you love someone. You don't. Hold back from them. You want them.

To be protected. You want them. To have the best. And if you love Jesus. Then whatever. It will cost you. You want him. To be honored. And glorified.

For me. To live. Is Christ. And to die. Is gain. Are you asking God. To help you.

[ 24 : 11 ] To make Jesus. More famous. More loved. More revered. More worshipped. That's your great. High calling.

Dads. Grandfathers. God. Will God. Use your life. To commend Christ. To the people. In your families.

And the way. You influence. Your families. And lead them. And encourage them. Will it lead them. To Christ. Or will it give them. A stumbling block. Pray to the Lord.

About these things. Confess your faults. To him. And ask him. To help you. To be a man. Who leads. In your home. In your family.

And in your church. So that your church. Is strong. And protected. And loved. And biblical. And full of Christ. Mothers.

[ 25 : 08 ] Sons. And daughters. And we say. To live. Is Christ. In the way. We treat.

One another. Then we'll be able. To say. To die. Is gain. In one of his sermons. The American minister.

John Piper. Talks about. Magnifying Christ. Making Christ. Great. Making him famous. And he says. Don't think. That when you do something.

To bring glory. Or praise to God. That you really are. Lifting up God. Or making him bigger. Or making him greater. That's not how it is. Don't think of yourself.

As a microscope. That if you get everything right. Then you will make. The small glory of God. Get bigger. That's not it. You are a telescope.

[ 26 : 02 ] God's glory is already big. God's name is already. Great. God's son is already beautiful. But if your life. Can be like a telescope.

It will bring. That great Christ. And his great glory. Into clearer sight. Into clearer vision. Into clearer focus. You'll bring.

The great mighty Christ. Before people. As you live for him. As you do. Every part of your life. In union with him.

And as you even face. Ageing. Or illness. Or death. Or bereavement. In faith. And in union with him.

So what have we seen? Focus on Christ. Whatever your circumstances. Focus on Christ. As your reason for life. As you live. Or even.

[ 26 : 58 ] As the way. As you will glorify him. When death comes. Paul knew. That if he was released. He could glorify Christ. If he went back into freedom.

And ministry. He would glorify Christ. If Caesar put him to death. He could glorify Christ. By the way he died. He just wanted Christ. To have the glory. By life.

Or by death. We've seen these things. And finally. Focus on Christ. For your eternal. Future. It is wonderful.

How future focused. The Bible is. How future focused. The New Testament is. There are references. To the return. Of the Lord Jesus. In almost every book.

Of the New Testament. And someone has done the sums. And worked out. That on average. Every 13 verses. In the New Testament. Refers to the.

[ 27 : 54 ] Glorious hope. Of our resurrection. Of the renewal. Of all things. Of the coming of the Lord. Of the dead rising. Of judgment.

Of everlasting joy. And peace. Of separation. To the glory of God. Between those who. Remain. Willfully blind.

And those who have had their eyes. And their hearts. Opened. To the beauties of God. One. In every 13 verses. I don't know.

If we are as. Turned towards the future. Focused on the future. Orientated towards the future. As that. It would be good for us. If we saw.

That the future is in. The Lord's hands. Paul was sure of that. As he says. For me. To live is Christ. And for me. To die.

[ 28 : 50 ] Is gain. I know. How many of you. Have been comforted. Over the years. By the familiar words. Of the shorter catechism. That reminds us. About our. Can we call it our.

Intermediate hope. Our hope. Before the great day. Of the resurrection. This catechism. Says the souls of believers. Are at their death. Made perfect. In holiness.

And they do immediately. Pass into glory. One of the greatest. Statements in theology. That human beings. Have ever written. So comforting. And so true.

But it is equally true. And the catechism. Goes on to say this. That their bodies. Matter. Their bodies. Being still. United to Christ.

Do rest. In their graves. Until the resurrection. Our hope. Says Paul. Is that everything. Will turn out.

[ 29 : 45 ] For our deliverance. As a church. We are constantly. Comforting the grieving.

We are constantly. Saying farewell. To people. We've known. And loved. And no sooner. Are we. Comforting. One family.

And grieving. With one family. Than we have to comfort. Another. And it can become. Overwhelming. Sometimes. But we are to. Comfort. One another.

With the words. About the future. That he is coming. Again. And that the dead. In Christ. Shall rise. And meet the Lord. In the air. And shall be.

Forever. With the Lord. We know. That. We are spiritually. With the Lord. Immediately. But the great hope.

[ 30 : 41 ] And we should. Rejoice in it. Is that God. Cares even about. Our tired. And poor. And weak. And fragile. And aging bodies. And our tired. Minds too.

That can let us down. The souls. Of believers. Precious to Christ. Christ. And the very dust. Of believers. Precious to Christ.

Joined to him. In the Holy Spirit. Until the day. Dawns. And the shadows. Flee away. There is no hope.

In. A philosophy. That is pure science. With nothing beyond this life. There is no hope. In a religion. That is all about now.

Social justice is good. But. Ensuring good sanitation. And clean roads. And good pavements. And safe driving speeds.

[ 31 : 41 ] Is only. A little fraction. Of what will bring joy. And happiness. To this world. Cleaning up the air. And the oceans. And the beaches. Valuable. Not enough.

Conserving. Conserving. This gorgeous. Beautiful world. Conserving the beauty. Of these Hebrides. Where you are privileged to live.

Good. But not enough. If we turn to dust. But the Bible. Says. To live is Christ.

Christ. And to die. Is more Christ. For a believer. To live is Christ. And to die is gain. Because we are another step closer.

To looking at these hills. And rocks. And mountains. To look at these oceans. To look at the islands. To look at the continents. To look at the stars. And to say.

[ 32 : 36 ] Sin is gone. And death is gone. And unbelief is gone. And the blindness. Of the enemy. Of our souls. Is gone. And he has made.

All things new. Paul. Faced. His future.

With Christ. He was comforted. He was strong. He was at peace. He was comforting others.

He was helping others. He was magnifying. Others. Have you ever been in a really dark place?

And someone has lit a match. Maybe there's been a power cut. Even in our 21st century world.

[ 33 : 37 ] We still get power cuts. And you're fumbling for matches. And candles. Or a torch. Or these days. I suppose. For a mobile phone. It's much the same.

If it's been charged. You'll get some light there. To fumble. And to do something. In the dark. In a dark, dark place. Even a match.

Can look bright. But when Paul. Faces prison. And death. He's not just dealing with matches. That will flash for a wee while.

And go out. Entertainments. And joys. And pleasures. And things. That he is focused on. That numb us for a wee while.

And go away. He's not looking. At the light of a match. He's not looking. At getting his purpose. Out of a joy. That just flickers.

[ 34 : 33 ] And goes out. He's looking at the light of the world. Imagine. If you've always been blind. And then you see the sun.

Imagine if you've always been cooked up in the dark. And then you come out into the brightness. Of a summer sun. The brightness of knowing Christ. Is better. And brighter.

And more glorious. God wants you. To see. And to believe. And to never be in darkness.

I am this dark world's light. Says the hymn writer. About Jesus. I am this dark world's light.

Have you seen him? For me. To live. To live. Is Christ. To die. Is gain. To live. Whatever. To live.

[ 35 : 33 ] To lie. I have to be full. London.

I have to be in peace. What do you know? Hope. And that. In the room. And of this.