

To live is Christ to die is Gain Philippians Overview

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Date: 01 February 2019

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, what has to be going right in life before you can rejoice? Do you rejoice when you get a job? Do you rejoice when you take a step up in your career?
- Do you rejoice when you level up in League of Legends? Do you rejoice when you get into a relationship? Do you rejoice when relationships with family and friends are going well?
- Do you rejoice when your kids are doing well at school? Do you rejoice when you get public recognition? Do you rejoice when you get a holiday?
- Do you rejoice when you find some money in your pocket that you didn't realise was there? Did you rejoice this morning when Liverpool won 3-0?
- I certainly hope you did. What gives you reason to rejoice? Because whatever you rejoice in or whatever you anticipate will give you joy, that is a really good indicator of what you are living for.
- [1 : 1 3] Whatever you rejoice in or you anticipate will give you joy, that's a really good indicator of what you're living for. Let me try and illustrate this with two songs.
- I want to compare two songwriters. The first guy has a great job. He loves his job as a musician. He's very popular at the moment. He has a supportive family and he's making loads of money.
- This is his lyrics. I made 100 grand this year. Clap, clap, clap, clap, clap, so what? Still lost. Still feeling anxious.
- Still worry about the same swear word. I made 100 grand this year. Clap, clap, clap, clap, clap, so what? Still lost. Still feel depressed like I'm trying to find a way in.
- Very raw words. He's trying to find joy but what he's living for isn't paying off. Still lost.
- [2 : 1 9] That's the first guy. The second guy, he's just lost all his children in a shipwreck and a fire has destroyed his investments which has just wrecked him financially.
- This is his lyrics. He sings this. Though Satan should buffet, though trial should come, let this blessed assurance control that Christ has regarded my helpless estate.
- It is well. It is well with my soul. How can this guy still have joy? And I reckon that is joy.
- It is well with my soul. He still has joy even though he's lost nearly everything dear to him in this life. Whatever you rejoice in or you anticipate will give you joy, that's a really good indicator of what you're living for.
- So in Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, joy and rejoicing, it's on every page. It's everywhere.
- [3 : 2 9] And this is especially incredible because Paul is writing from Rome in prison. Imagine yourself in prison. He's in chains. He's in chains.
- Any minute someone could come to him and tell him he's got the death sentence and it would be carried out pretty much straight away. But six times he says that he is rejoicing.
- What is this guy living for? And he tells the Philippians and through them he's telling us as well in chapter 4 verse 4, rejoice in the Lord always.

I will say it again, rejoice. Now we're probably cringing at the moment, thinking, Paul, you can't possibly mean me.

If you knew what I was going through, you would have written me into the Bible as an exception. Rejoice in the Lord, except when you're sick, except when you're lonely, except when you feel you've been mistreated.

[4 : 45] But to the rest of you, I'll say rejoice. He doesn't say that. Now Paul isn't telling us to fake it. He's not telling us to fake it until we make it.

He's not telling us to ignore our circumstances. But he is going to show us the way that there's reason that we can always have joy.

Don't feel guilty for not rejoicing. But see that if Paul is telling us to rejoice, it must be possible. He shows us the way. He's rejoicing.

Whatever is happening in life. So how can Paul rejoice always and expect us to as well?

Well, here's the reason. Here's what Paul was living for. Come with me to chapter 1, verse 21. Have a look with me. This is what Paul is living for.

[5 : 46] For to me, to live is Christ.

And to die is gain. Christ himself is Paul's greatest treasure. To have him is to have life.

If you've got him this morning, by faith in him, you have life. For Paul, death is not losing life. It's gaining more.

Because it's gaining more of him. If Christ is our greatest treasure, then we have him. If we have him, we have life. And since we have Christ, no matter what else is going on around us, we can rejoice.

We can have joy. Even while we're hurting, we can have joy. We have reason to rejoice. So we want to live for Christ too, don't we?

[6 : 54] We want Christ to be our life. So the question is, what does it look like to believe with Paul to live is Christ? In Paul's letter to the Philippians, I think he tells us three main ways.

He says a lot of things that we're going to look at in more detail. But I think there's three main ways that we live for Christ, that we show that Christ is our deepest treasure.

What we're going to do is spend about half our time this morning looking at the background of Philippians and what we share in common with the church then. So the outline doesn't really reflect the time we'll spend, so don't freak out.

We're going to spend about half our time doing that. And then we're going to look at the three ways that we can show that we're living for Christ. So please get ready to flip back and forth through the letter or using your tablet, phone, whatever you're using.

So get your Bibles ready. And please just get ready to get an overall impression of this life-giving message. We've got a whole series to just soak in it and dig down deep.

[7 : 59] Today is just really an impression. Okay, the Philippian church. What were they like? What was going on in their congregation?

Look at chapter 1, verses 3 and 4 with me. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.

Why? Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. No matter what situation Paul was in, for 30 years or so, these guys have been praying and giving and standing up for the gospel alongside Paul.

They've been sharing in Paul's trouble. They've even sent one of their dear brothers, Epaphroditus, to Paul with gifts. He almost died doing it.

These guys are passionate partners in the gospel. This is a church who are sure of who Christ is, his death and resurrection, his certain return.

[9 : 12] And they're working and striving for the gospel out of an overflow of their faith. I would call this a mature church. This is a really positive letter. And Paul has a lot of joy for this church.

Have a look at verses 7 and 8 of chapter 1. Listen to Paul's affection for this church. It is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart.

God is my witness how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. He loves this church. Their common faith, their partnership in the gospel side by side has created a deep mutual love for each other.

And that's one of the main reasons that he's writing this letter. Because they love him so much and they love the gospel so much, they're really worried about Paul being in prison.

He's writing the letter to calm their fears. That's one of the reasons. This church is anxious. This church is anxious. And a big cause of their anxiety is that God has let their founder be chained up.

[10 : 27] Flick over to chapter 4 verse 10 with me. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

You were indeed concerned for me but you had no opportunity to show it, he means. They were really concerned for him. That's one of the main reasons he wrote this letter.

But they're also very anxious because they themselves are being attacked. Flick back to chapter 3 and just have a look at the first 10 or so verses.

Paul has to strongly warn them of those who demand that they put their confidence not only in Christ but also in works of the law.

Paul uses some of the strongest language he ever uses to encourage them not to give an inch. Watch out for the dogs.

[11 : 33] Look out for the evildoers. Look out for those who mutilate the flesh. Referring to circumcision. These guys are under theological attack to add to Christ.

And we're also told in chapter 1 verse 30 that it has been granted to the Philippians to suffer for Christ's sake. To engage in the same conflict that they saw that Paul had.

What did they see that Paul had? I had the pleasure of being with the men's group this week. And they went to Acts 16 and we studied Acts 16 together where the church is founded.

When we read there, the church is founded first by Lydia being converted. And then Paul and his companions are beaten publicly and thrown into prison.

In prison, while they're singing, mind you, and praying, there's an earthquake. The earthquake. The earthquake removes their chains and the jailer is about to kill himself because he's convinced that the prisoners have just run for it, as you would expect.

[12 : 44] Paul cries out, saves him, stops him from killing himself. And the jailer asks, what must I do to be saved? He and his household are converted. This church is not unfamiliar with attack.

Their very church was formed partly because Paul was attacked. But these threats still have the potential to rock their confidence in God.

They are under attack socially, maybe from authorities, not sure. And they're under attack theologically to add something to Christ. And there also appears to be a widespread issue in the church.

We see a hint of it in chapter 1, verse 15. Because there seems to be a few individuals who are preaching Christ from motives of envy and rivalry.

Perhaps they saw Paul's imprisonment as an opportunity to get more influence in the church. And then in chapter 4, verse 2, there's two women, Iodia and Syntyche, who are both solid Christians.

[13 : 55] Their names are written in the book of life. They've been striving for the gospel alongside Paul, but they're at odds. We're not told why, but they're at odds. And then there's chapter 2.

There seems to be a widespread culture of people doing things not primarily for love's sake, but out of selfish ambition and conceit. Just having an exaggerated view of yourself.

They're looking to their own interests. So, the church in Philippi is mixed. And I don't think that should surprise us, should it?

Churches are always mixed. This church is mature. They are passionate partners in the gospel, but they're also riddled with anxiety. Especially as their church founder is in chains.

They're under attack themselves. And there's a widespread culture of just being self-seeking. These believers are in danger of no longer living for Christ, losing hope that God is still at work in them and through them.

[15 : 04] They attempted to just protect themselves out of fear. They attempted to compromise the gospel because that's easier. And they attempted to slowly lose their passion for serving the Lord.

Paul writes into this situation. So, here's the hard question. Is this true for us as well? What's the grace evangelical church situation?

What do we share in common with the church in Philippi? Is this a church who are passionately working for the sake of the gospel?

I could list all the formal ministries going on. I could try and describe all the informal ministry behind the scenes stuff that's going on.

I would fail because there's so much going on. Can I just point to one piece of evidence that convinces me that, yes, this is a church passionate for the gospel?

[16 : 08] Now, I might be biased here, but when you as a church sent Jeremy and Hayley and Emma and I off to college, you didn't know whether we would come back.

You sent us all because you wanted to advance the gospel, didn't you? It didn't matter where, whether it was here, whether it's overseas, whether it's in Sydney.

And you gave generously, you gave a lot of money to get us ready for that. I really appreciate it. It affirmed, it was really good.

Anyway, can I just say that you prioritise the kingdom. You're willing to let, I assume you love us, you're willing to let people you love go for the sake of the kingdom.

Now, maybe you just gave the money to get rid of me for two years. I can understand that as well. But I don't think so. I think this is a church that is passionate for the gospel, that gives out of generosity because of your love for Jesus.

[17 : 20] Are we anxious? Individually? Yeah, many of us. One of Grace's founders, Don McMurray, he's not in prison.

Though if you keep it up, Don, you... But in recent years, our leadership has been shaken. People we love have left.

And it's made us all question, is God still committed to us? It worries us. Are we attacked?

Aren't you super aware in conversations that... There's just topics that if you even gave a hint of your Christian conviction on, it would be like a dementor from Harry Potter came in and just sucked the warmth out of the conversation.

Aren't you super aware of that in those conversations? So I think socially, yeah. Thankfully, from authorities, we have a lot of safety at the moment.

[18 : 33] So we should praise God for that. Are the Jewish people trying to impose circumcision in the law of Moses? I don't think so. Haven't heard of it. Please let me know if that happens.

But I think in another way, we are in danger of adding something to Christ. Let me try and illustrate. When I was at the LIT camp with some of the youth a few weeks ago, I was chatting to a year 12 boy, and I asked if he was confident that Jesus had saved him and would never let him go.

His answer was way more insightful than I was expecting. He said something like, I know that I'm definitely saved, and I know I'm only saved by faith in Jesus. I was really glad to hear that.

Then he said, but there's pressure on me to prove I've got faith by doing lots of things. Don't you feel that sometimes?

I think we will always be under attack to move away from faith in Jesus alone making us righteous before God. We will always be under that attack.

[19 : 45] In our hearts, and maybe from outside as well. Here's maybe a more heart-heating one.

Are we self-seeking? Are we driven by envy and rivalry? Well, we certainly don't want to think so. But why do I sometimes feel threatened when a brother or sister is better at something than me?

Why do I feel threatened by that? I think it's because there's envy in my heart. Why do I sometimes think church cleaning is beneath me?

Am I just choosing the acts of service that are comfortable? Or am I driven to serve in whatever way others need me?

Or do I just choose what's comfortable for me? I think that's how it plays out in my heart. So I think we do share some things in common with the Philippian church.

[20 : 55] We need to hear this letter. Not just this morning, but soak in it. We need to rejoice in the Lord. We have a whole series to carefully listen.

But for the rest of this morning, we're just going to hear three major things that Paul writes. Firstly, church, be confident that God is at work in you.

Second, stand firm together in Christ. Third, keep bearing fruit in gospel work.

These things is what it looks like to make Paul's words your own words. To me, to live is Christ.

This is what it looks like. So let's quickly go through these one by one. First, be confident that God is at work in you. What is Paul's confidence that this church will grow in faith and love?

[22 : 03] Look at chapter 1, verse 6 with me and let it sink in. Here's Paul's confidence that God will keep growing his church.

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Do you doubt whether you're changing in the ways that God wants you to? Do you feel stuck in a particular sin? Be confident.

God is at work in you because when God starts saving you, he finishes it. He has a long-term goal in mind. Stop measuring it just on one day.

He's got a long-term goal. He's committing to finishing it when Jesus returns. He is at work. We have to strive for it.

[23 : 18] Yes. We have to pursue it ourselves to think and choose in ways that are more and more like Christ. But chapter 2 verse 13 tells us very clearly we can only strive to do this because it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Be confident that God is at work in you, in us because he promises to. He's committed to us.

And God is still at work in us and through us even in dark times. Think of Paul. He was a man of God used to establish so many churches and how did he do it?

By travelling around but now he is locked up. He could die any moment. This is a dark time for the church. But look at his perspective in chapter 1 verse 12.

Have a look. I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. Others are more bold to speak up for Jesus.

[24 : 34] All the soldiers guarding me know that I'm here only because of my faith in Jesus. brothers, this is a good thing. There would have been a family sitting in the congregation when this letter was first read out that would have been smiling from ear to ear.

That God is using his imprisonment to save. Paul isn't focusing on the injustice of it all though that would have been so painful.

he's focusing on Christ. He's living for Christ. He wants Christ's name to be known and to be treasured. And so in that he can rejoice.

Secondly, to live for Christ is to stand firm together in Christ. There's two aspects to this one. Firstly, stand firm together as one.

Don't let envy and rivalry, selfish ambition, being full of yourself motivate you. But Paul doesn't leave it as a command, don't do it. He spends way more time painting a picture of what to do.

[25 : 54] A beautiful picture of Christ. Chapter 2, think like Christ because you are in Christ. Think like him who did not grasp at greatness but emptied himself, humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

The one who lowers themselves for the sake of others is the one that God counts as truly great. And the result of this Christ-like humility is true unity, true serving one another, true looking out for the interests of others.

Have this mind because we are in Christ. We need to share that humility, stand firm together. And the other aspect is to stand firm in the gospel of Christ by counting everything as rubbish compared to gaining Christ.

We see this in the start of chapter three. If someone had reason to be accepted by God as a righteous man based on their own efforts, Paul would be top of the list.

He's up there. He would smash all of us. But what's his perspective? All the things he could do. Once he got Christ, he saw them as valuable as they actually are.

[27 : 23] Rubbish. Dung. I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

That promotion at work, benching 10 kilograms above your personal best, paying off your mortgage, rubbish compared to knowing Christ.

Be confident of God's work in you, stand firm together in Christ and keep bearing fruit in gospel work. Philippians, grace evangelical, you have given of your very best towards the work of the gospel.

Keep going. Have you noticed that Paul talks about himself a lot? Is he narcissistic?

No, I don't think so. Chapter 3 verse 17 gives us the reason. He says this, brothers, sisters, join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

[28 : 38] And in chapter 2 he gives two examples, Timothy and Epaphroditus. So who is the Epaphroditus in your life? Our society says to make your own decisions, carve out your own way, based on your own reasoning?

It's full of it. God says imitate. Look at people who are passionate for the gospel, watch them, keep your eyes on them, imitate. There are times when you're going to lose heart.

There are times when you're going to have no idea what the godly response to a situation is. areas in your life, my life, I'm not even aware of yet, that are getting in the road of serving Christ.

We need an Epaphroditus. There are many Epaphroditises in this church. Pick one.

Pick a few. Let's imitate those who are passionate for Christ. So we've heard very quickly, very quickly, three ways that it looks like to live for Christ, to treasure Christ.

[29 : 52] It's to be confident that God is at work in us and through us. It's to stand firm together and it's to keep bearing fruit. And what drove all these things, what drove it was Paul's all-consuming passion.

And we need to share this passion with him. Otherwise, we're just not going to care or we're going to try and do it in our own strength. Neither of those things would be good.

We need to share this passion. What is this passion? Come and look at it in chapter 1 verse 20. Chapter 1 verse 20. Here's Paul's passion.

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 honoured. He means these words.

He could be executed at any moment. What is Paul living for? That Christ is honoured. Whatever is happening, he can rejoice in that.

[31 : 06] Whatever is happening. I love this. Even as he says it, he puts Christ at the centre. He doesn't say that I honour Christ.

He puts Christ as a subject, that Christ will be honoured. Anyway, I love that. He keeps Christ at the centre. Honoured. And the word honoured literally means make large, magnify.

It's saying Christ himself is my life, he is my treasure, and therefore I want him to be greatly enlarged by the way I live. I want him to be greatly enlarged and seen for as precious as he is, by counting death as gain.

man. This is the passion that's going to help us live for Christ. This is the passion that's going to help us be confident that God is at work, it's going to motivate us to stand firm together in Christ, and it's going to motivate us to keep bearing fruit for his sake, because we want him seen for as beautiful and as treasured as he deserves to be.

So will you treasure Christ? Will you treasure Christ? Will we as a church treasure Christ and want to see him honoured no matter what?

[32 : 41] Let me pray. Please pray with me. our Father in heaven, we struggle to see Christ for as great as he is, but we know that he is great.

Lord, we see him lowering himself for our sake, bleeding for our sake, even though he is in very nature God, he served us.

Lord, help us treasure him. Make us a church who love Christ and want to see him honoured above all else.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.