

# Why Your Life Is Worth Living

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[ 0 : 01 ] For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor.

Yet what I shall choose, I cannot tell, for I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.

And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated. You may be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades. The word of the Lord endures forever.

[ 1 : 27 ] Let's pray. Let's pray. Oh, God, we ask that your Holy Spirit with your people will illumine your truth to us.

Help us to receive your word and to eat it. Help us to see Christ more clearly today, to see our need for Christ even more strongly.

And Lord, by faith, we ask for your help that we can see that shoreline where you will bring us in the life to come. And that all of this will give us confidence that our joy and our progress in the faith in Christ will be sustained and strengthened by your grace until the very end.

We ask this for Christ's sake. Amen. Amen. Well, the Lord gave a brilliant mind to William Shakespeare.

And Shakespeare put some insightful words into a troubled mind of Hamlet, one of his characters. And those words give us insight into the fallen mindset of mankind.

[ 2 : 57 ] In this tragedy, Hamlet was hard pressed between two bad options. To be or not to be is the famous line. That is the question.

To live is to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. But to die is to enter the undiscovered country from whose born no traveler returns, puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of.

Thus conscience makes us cowards of us all. Press between two bad options. Living for Hamlet with his troubled mind is a bad option.

It's miserable. But that uncertainty of what comes after this life is even more scary. See, the Holy Spirit, by contrast, makes it very clear by the teaching of Scripture that if Hamlet only knew how bad it truly is for a soul outside of Christ, He would be even more troubled and disturbed.

The Bible says that the souls of the wicked are cast into hell where they remain in torment and darkness and they're reserved to the judgment of the great day.

[ 4 : 15 ] You get misery in this life. You get misery in this life. And there's a scary unknown next. And He said that conscience makes cowards of us all.

Well, how many? How many of those people we work with every day live in this? This. State of not even knowing how bad it's going to be after this life.

And it may seem in Hamlet's mind like it's selfish cowardice. But they're in ignorance. They're in darkness. And these are immortal souls for all of eternity.

Once they pass through the darkness of death, cast into even more misery. It's not an unknown land. The Scripture has made it very clear.

This question of life and death, it's something that even children will innocently ask their parents about. And how many children don't know the truth of what they're headed to?

[ 5 : 16 ] And therefore, there's no good answer to what is the purpose of this life? Now, Paul's words here, they may sound similar, but they're the exact opposite.

Paul was hard-pressed between a very good option, which is to stay alive, and a far better option, which is to be with Christ.

Look at verse 23. He says, I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. But I'm so confident in the great gain that death will bring.

Verse 25, he says, I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith. Verse 26, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ.

The Gospel brings this light of Scripture to all who will read it and who will understand God's purpose. To all whom the Holy Spirit will illumine, this is the meaning of life, and this is what comes after death.

[ 6 : 19 ] In Christ, joy abundant, even more gain. Outside of Christ, even more misery and eternal torment. So Paul is hard-pressed, but he makes it very clear.

It's my calling now to live for you. So, beloved congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to bring you this message today.

And I pray that, even for a reason I don't know, that this is what the Lord has for you to hear today. And here it is. Your life is worth living.

I want to open up from us in this passage several reasons for why your life is worth living. First, in this life, you get to enjoy the spiritual presence of Christ by faith.

Your life is worth living because even right now in this life, you and I, we get to enjoy the spiritual presence of Jesus Christ by faith.

[ 7 : 24 ] In verse 18, Paul said, I will rejoice. In verse 20, he said, for Christ will be magnified in my body one way or the other. And now in verse 21, he says, for me to live Christ, to die gain.

And that's exactly how it reads in the original language. There's no verb. It simply says, for me to live Christ. For me to die gain.

Greek scholars have said it's the language is explosive. It hits your ear. He puts Christ at the forefront of your attention.

That's what life is. Well, here's the veteran pastor, the one who anything that he's going to preach now, especially this is going to be a letter inspired by the spirit.

We should all be sitting around with 40 pages of legal pad ready to take notes. What is the meaning of life? You know, some of these Greeks in Philippi, we've read Seneca. We've read the Stoics.

[ 8 : 31 ] We've read Socrates. What is the meaning of life? This church is now 10 years old. And Paul says, I'll give it to you in one word. Life is Christ. And to die, gain.

Two words say it all. He has that same language in 2 Corinthians 5.17. He wrote, therefore, if anyone is in Christ, new creation.

Leaves the verb out of it. In Portuguese, the Greek is translated in John 1 to say in the beginning was the verb. See, there's no verb in this sentence.

To live. Christ. Christ is the verb. He is the active power, the agent of life. A man named Maltby Babcock, the one who wrote, this is my father's world.

He observed, quote, life is what we are alive to. Close quote. Life is what we are alive to. Different ones of us come alive to different things.

[ 9 : 39 ] One of my memories was walking through Walmart with my grandma. And when we got to the fabric aisle, she came alive. And I could not wait to get out of there.

It did not do it for me. I'm different than my grandma. I can't fall asleep watching a soccer game. I just get worked up and excited. It doesn't even matter who's playing.

I'm just I'm thinking through the tactics and that makes me come alive. Well, life is what we are alive to. Maybe we felt at times I live for comfort.

For some of you, that's why you never will go camping. You live for comfort. And to die will be the greatest discomfort. Maybe you feel I live to optimize my health.

I want to delay dying as long as I can because death is to lose health. For me to live is financial abundance. To die is to leave it all behind.

[ 10 : 39 ] Life is what we are alive to. For me to live is a good reputation. And to die is to be forgotten. For me to live is adrenaline, maybe.

To die is to miss my body. For me to live is achievement. And to die means I am mounted to nothing. Life is what we come alive to.

The point of verse 21 is this. If you and I are living for anything other than Christ. Then dying for you will be lost.

One commentator observed that this concise, Christ-centered view of life and death was likely hammered out for Paul on the anvil of crisis.

So picture Paul's life put on an anvil, an iron piece here. And the hammer of God's providence, refining him, sanctifying him, hammers this into Paul.

[ 11 : 45 ] Everything else is is knocked off and hammered away. But what is left is Christ. To live Christ. Die.

Gain. The flow of this letter to the Philippians so far is Christ, isn't it? Because of Paul's chains, Christ was made known. Verse 13.

Through Paul's rivals, Christ was nonetheless preached. Verse 18. As Paul's life were thinner and thinner, Christ was magnified. Verse 20. For Paul to live is to be alive to Christ.

Verse 21. And for Paul to die is to be with Christ. Verse 23. For me to live is Christ. John Gill commented, what this means is that Christ is the efficient cause and the author of your spiritual life. Christ produced life in your soul. Christ is the matter and the object of your life. Christ is that on which your spirit lives. It's not so much you that you live anymore as Christ who lives in you.

[ 12 : 55 ] You live by faith in Christ. Your spiritual life is maintained and supported by feeding on Christ as the bread of your life. And Christ is what you aim at throughout the whole course of your life.

To live is Christ. Your life is worth living. If that's true for you. To live is Christ. In this life, you get to enjoy the spiritual presence of Christ by faith.

By faith you've apprehended Christ. He's yours. He energizes you. You have him. He is spiritually present, dwelling in us as Christians. And living in Christ makes this life worth living.

Number two, this life prepares you for an even greater joy. The actual presence of Christ next. This life is worth living because this life is preparing you for the actual presence of Christ in the next life.

He says in verse 21, to die is gain. And then he opens that up in verse 23. He says, I am heart pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.

[ 14 : 09 ] In verse 23, he says, I have this desire. That's a very strong longing. That's how badly he wants to be in the next life with Christ. And then he says, it's far better.

The word for word translation would be very far better or much more better. Sometimes that's how little kids speak. I want this because it's much more better.

Well, that's bad English, but it's good Greek. They wouldn't send you back to school if you say that. You can pile up three times. It's much more better to be with Christ.

In verse 23, that word, he says, I have this strong longing, this desire to depart. And the word depart has interesting meanings as well as it's used in that world.

Depart can mean to solve a problem like we're leaving this problem behind. It can be used in the naval, the military, you know, where the ship is about to depart.

[ 15 : 14 ] It means to hoist up the anchor. And then the third meaning, it can mean that you're departing a campsite. One historian explained how this Roman army, as it would penetrate and advance the kingdom, it would spend extra long setting up a tent and an encampment for the army.

But they would do something different than other empires is they would not take it all back down and carry it with them. Everything they had gathered locally to build this small little encampment, they would leave it because they wanted everyone to see the Roman army has been here.

So to depart would be to leave this tent that you had all dwelt in and lived in. You leave it there and you advance on. You progress to what's next. And that stays behind.

When a Christian leaves the tent of this body behind and departs. It's far better.

This body, we're so used to living it. Our souls are very comfortable in it because it's all we've known. But our souls are also united to Christ. And our union to Christ is pulling us to be with him.

[ 16 : 26 ] Even though our bodies are here, earthly, we know we're going to have to leave him behind. So there's mixed emotions about death. But for a Christian, as God's word gets into us and the Holy Spirit cleans up our thinking, we can agree with the title of Thomas Brooks' funeral sermon.

A Believer's Last Day, His Best Day. Scripture doesn't skirt around the topic of death. Listen to these verses. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.

Psalm 116.15 In Numbers, we read this cry. Let me die the death of the righteous and may my end be like theirs.

This is a good desire to die like the righteous and have the same end as them. And Jesus pointed out in the New Testament, he said, See, God is the God of the living.

Abraham is with God by faith. He's alive with God. You should want to be like that. You should want to die and be with God. As all the others have gone ahead of us in the faith.

[ 17 : 38 ] This life prepares you for an even greater joy. And it's the actual presence of Christ in the next life. Our confession of faith summarizes the teaching of the Bible this way.

The bodies of men after death return to dust and see corruption. The Bible is explicit. They don't clean it up. But the Bible says worms will eat your body.

Ecclesiastes 12.7 says, The dust returns to the earth as it was. See, your body is dust. And the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Remember, God formed Adam and breathed life into Adam. God is the giver of life. You have a soul because God breathed it into you. And your soul in Christ returns to God.

Our confession goes on to say, But their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately returned to God who gave them.

[ 18 : 41 ] Jesus told the criminal on the cross, Today, this day, you will be with me in paradise. There's no other options for a soul besides heaven or hell.

Many have taught wrongly all these other alternatives, but there's no other option for a soul. There's no purgatory. There's no place where your soul waits.

If you've only committed a certain type of sins and then other people can pray you into heaven. In the, what's the name of the, I forgot the name of, oh, Adventist.

The Adventist, my understanding is they still teach about soul sleep. So your soul isn't with Christ. It's asleep until his resurrection. But Jesus said, this day, you will be with me in paradise.

Another option that probably most people, when you talk to, it's annihilationism. That your soul simply stops existing. And that goes against what the Bible teaches. Our souls are immortal.

[ 19 : 44 ] You don't just stop existing. Your soul will spend eternity either in heaven or in hell. 1 Corinthians 15.22 says that in Christ, believers shall all be made alive.

You are alive now, but at your death, it will be gain. It will be gain when you die. Well, in what way can dying be gain for a believer?

One old pastor, last name Stones, he pointed out four ways that were very helpful to me. Number one, your death will be gain in the knowledge of Christ.

1 John 3.2 says, beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. But we know that when he is revealed, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. You know Christ now by faith. You know him truly. But at death, it will be gain. You will see him as he is. You will know Christ at death.

[ 20 : 49 ] John Flavel pointed out, to see God in his word and works is the happiness of the saints on earth. But to see him face to face will be the fullness of our blessedness in heaven.

Death is the end of faith. A transforming, sanctifying vision of God. A state of perfect joy. Our highest delight.

To die is gain in the knowledge of Christ. How else is our death gain if you are in Christ? Death will be gain in the holiness of Christ.

Romans 7.24. Notice the tenses that Paul used. He says, oh, wretched man that I am. He doesn't say, oh, wretched man that I was.

Who will deliver me? Not who did deliver me. He still needs further delivering from this body of death. Not that body of death. Do you see this life for a Christian?

[ 21 : 55 ] You are declared holy by God. But there's an ongoing battle to your very last breath to grow in the holiness of God. And when you die, you will have gained holiness that's unrestricted by the flesh.

That's a massive gain for us, isn't it? John Flavel again commented, death is the end of sin. You'll be finally free from your flesh.

How much better will your state of perfect holiness and purity be then than this state of temptation and corruption now?

How much better that state of rest and peace than than this of labor and sorrow now? Your death will bring you great gain in the holiness of Christ.

How else will our death be gained? It will be gained in the fellowship of Christ. It will be gained in the fellowship of Christ.

[ 22 : 59 ] The souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness are received into paradise, says our confession, summarizing scripture, where they are with Christ.

And behold the face of God in light and glory waiting for the full redemption of their bodies. This is putting to words what the Bible teaches in places like Philippians 321.

God will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. In Ephesians 314, Paul prayed, I bow my knees to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

See, these promises are true for every single believer, everyone for whom Christ died, who receives the grace of God by faith. All those souls of the righteous will be in the presence of God made perfect, beholding his face.

This is the family of God that's in heaven and on earth. It's a vast multitude. God gave Abraham a picture of this. He said, look up at the stars and see how many you can count.

[ 24 : 17 ] This is what the seed of Christ will be like gathered around the throne of God. So at death, we will gain this great fellowship of Christ.

Now we're lean and mean. Our numbers are few but mighty. But one day we'll be with the great host of the army of heaven. And the fourth way in which this is gain for today, at least, is it's a gain in our communion with Christ.

It's a gain in our communion with Christ at death. Paul was so confident of this in Romans 8, 39. He wrote, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Nothing can separate us. We will be with him. We are secured by his love. And our communion with now is by faith spiritually. But 1 Corinthians 13, 12 says that now we see only like through a glass, darkly.

But then, after death, we will see him face to face. What would that be like? To pass through that valley, that dark, shadowy valley of death.

[ 25 : 35 ] And then see the light of his face and the glory washing over us on the other side. Talk of death as departing or passing through.

And we've probably all driven on I-25 heading west. You know how on the mountains the weather does weird things. And you can be on this side of the Eisenhower Tunnel. And it's a blizzard.

It's dark. It's scary. And you go into a very dark tunnel. Only to come out on the other side and you see the blue sky. The green. Just the beautiful scenery and Frisco Lake.

What would that be like? To pass through and see the Lord. Our communion with him will be so much greater on the other side of death. Well, the third point from this text today is that your life is also worth living.

To labor in the service of his people on earth. Your life is also worth living to labor in the service of his people on earth.

[ 26 : 41 ] In verse 22, this is what Paul resolves for himself. In verse 22, he writes, If I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor.

Yet what I shall choose, I cannot tell. And then verse 24, he says, Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. So to live is to labor.

And it's to produce fruit that will last, that would be pleasing to the Lord by laboring. To remain in the flesh and laboring this way is needful to God's people.

God doesn't need you or me or Paul to do his work in his people. But God chooses to labor through his people to produce this fruit for his glory.

He chooses to invite us into what he's doing. He's the one who does anything extraordinary. But he, just as Christ humbled himself like a servant, He chooses to do his extraordinary work through such ordinary ministry.

[ 27 : 49 ] And ordinary work within his body. You know, every time we come a little bit early and I'm looking around the room, So many of you serve here in every single way. You're serving one another.

You're doing this for God's glory. This is fruit that is pleasing to him. And you're doing it because he's given you another day to be alive and to breathe. And he's choosing to bring about the fruit that will last for all eternity.

That effect that you're having on other believers within a church in the ways he's ordained. He's doing it that way because it's pleasing to him. It brings glory to him. And it's for our good. In Mark 8, 35, Jesus preached, Whoever would save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's sake will save it.

So here's Paul following this teaching from Christ. I'll lose my life for the sake of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5, 15. Paul preached to the church, See, you died with Christ so that the life of Christ in you serves his purpose, advances his kingdom on earth.

[ 29 : 07 ] I've mentioned 2 Timothy as a counterpoint to the book of Philippians. It's also from the prison. And it gives us some more insights into how Paul was viewing these churches and praying for them and how he was laboring in the service of the churches, even from prison, those final two years of his life.

And in 2 Timothy 4, 6, Paul wrote, I am already being poured out as a drink offering. And the time of my departure has come. That same word for departure he uses again.

And it's like you can see through a glass how many drops are left. And Paul's saying, I've already been poured out. It's down to the very last little bits. And now it's time for my departure.

But what was it that the Lord used Paul to deliver to his churches, to bless them? See, in Philippians, he's saying, I still have work that I can do.

I hope to go be with you. But in the meantime, I'm praying for you. And here's a letter by the inspiration of the Spirit for you. Well, after this letter to the Philippians, the Holy Spirit continued to breathe out Scripture for the church.

[ 30 : 18 ] The church is at the time and for us today. See, this labor, this fruitful labor that was needful for you, it included the letter to the Colossians. It included 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews.

Even from prison, the Lord has more fruitful labor for Paul. And maybe the labor that God has for each one of us, maybe in assisted living, maybe with a broken body, maybe in much harder times than what we feel right now.

Only God will know all the ways in which he'll bless that labor. But he's kept us alive for his purpose and service to his people on earth until our very last day.

I've shared with you, I think, in the past how the example of John Bunyan is so encouraging. You know, John Bunyan was imprisoned and he missed his family.

And he wrote especially he felt he felt that conviction that he wasn't able to care for one of his daughters who was blind. She needed extra help. And so he was torn. Here he is in prison feeling like he's not able to be a pastor and do what God called him to do.

[ 31 : 30 ] He can't even care for his own daughter who desperately needs him. But from prison, those long days, he wrote The Pilgrim's Progress, which next to the Bible is one of the longest standing bestsellers.

See, God squeezed out of John Bunyan what was needful for his church to continue strengthening and blessing, even though it's not on the same level of Scripture. Maybe for us, it's a letter or a note of encouragement to another brother or sister, a grandchild.

Maybe it's a relationship God's going to bring into your life to disciple and be part of disciple making. Whatever that is, God has a purpose for you in service to his people on earth as long as you're alive.

Number four, your life is further worth living to help others progress and rejoice in Christ.

In verse 25 and 26, Paul writes, Not only is our life to be of service to others, it's to help others progress and rejoice.

[ 32 : 59 ] Paul was no longer having to live for himself. God had sanctified all of those motives out of him.

In 2 Corinthians 5, 7 and 8, Paul says very bluntly, We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. But he says, See, your life might be to bring joy and rejoicing to a person who God has already saved, but who is lonely and who is downcast.

How is it that a person very near to death can bring back joy to other believers? I think that it's because joy starts with God himself.

And the closer you are to passing from life to death, and it would be great gain to be with God, the source of all joy, the closer you access that and you're so aware of it, that God is the fountain of all joy.

And you're passing that back to others. Joy in life and death are rare. And the joy from God, it's limited.

[ 34 : 28 ] But the quality of the joy that flows from God is of the highest quality. The joy that flows from God is limited only to those who are in Christ.

But if you are in Christ, the quality of the joy you share flowing from God himself is as infinite, John Flavio put, as the infinite God himself.

Because it's the joy shared between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And through the person and work of Christ, that joy overflows to all who are united to Christ.

And that's why Paul can say that for me to live is to help you progress closer and closer to the joy of the triune God. Paul had written to them, I have confidence that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Jesus had that same view as he was very close to his death. In John 17, 17, he prayed, Father, sanctify them, my disciples, in the truth.

[ 35 : 31 ] Your word is truth. Prepare them for heaven. Sanctify them. Wash over them. Progress them. Pull them closer. Acts 20, 32 picks up on that same note.

The word of his grace is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. Uncified. Your life is further worth living to help others progress and rejoice in Christ.

Paul had written, we saw this last week, that he longs with an eager expectation. There's an anticipation to be with God and to be with Christ and for all God's people to be with him.

And I'm reminded of the contagious energy that a child has thinking about a family reunion. We're going to get to see our cousins, you know, something they get really excited by.

And that just becomes contagious. And everyone who's picking up on that excitement, you start to feel it, too. Man, I'm excited, too. This is going to be wonderful. And that anticipation, it spreads.

[ 36 : 42 ] And it's the joy that is getting passed on for something really good. And this, whoever has the most faith and the most eyes set on that good thing that's about to come for all of us, you're actually pulling others into that excitement with you.

And that anticipation builds. I believe that's Paul's prayer for the church. Church, get into God's word. Let God sanctify you. It's so close.

It's around the corner. I can almost smell heaven. It's going to be so good. You want to be there, too. Well, the fifth and final encouragement I have for you today is this, that your life is so worth living because you get to share Christ's presence with others.

Your life is so worth living. Because if you're in Christ, you get to share his presence with others. That's how Paul ends this little passage.

Look at verse 26. Even though he'll never get out of this prison, he's looking forward to being with them in person. One more time. In verse 26, it's by my coming to you again.

[ 37 : 51 ] By me being physically present with you in the same room. Look at each other in the eye. Greeting you with a big hug. He wants Christ to be magnified in his body one way or the other.

If he dies, Christ will be magnified because we know his soul is with the Lord. But if he lives, Christ will be magnified in his body because he can be physically present with his church. See, I don't see anywhere in Scripture a place for Christians to gather virtually or even multi-campus.

I mean, we just get so far away from the actual presence of being with God's people. And that's what I see very clearly in Scripture. Jesus said, Matthew 18, 20, where two or three are gathered together in my name.

There I am in the midst of them. Jesus is present in the midst of his people when they're gathered together in the name of Jesus. Hebrews 10, 25.

Let's not forsake assembling together, but let's exhort one another in person together while we're meeting. So much more as you see the day approaching.

[ 39 : 04 ] The more that that great day of Jesus Christ is close to you, the more and more and more should we want to be with his people. That's the effect. That's the desire of Paul. And that's the effect it should have on us as well.

I was so encouraged yesterday hearing this song by Andrew Peterson, thinking of that great day of the Lord and the effect it has on me. His lyrics go like this.

And you will rise up in the end.

And you will rise up in the end. I know the night is cruel, but the day is coming soon when you will rise up in the end. See, I need that reminder.

