

# To Live is Christ and to Die is Gain

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 01 November 2009

Preacher: Rev Iver Martin

[ 0 : 00 ] Turn with me for a short while this evening to the chapter we read, the letter to the Philippians, Paul's letter to the Philippians, and reading at verse 19, but focusing on those well-known words of verse 21.

We'll read from verse 19, Philippians chapter 1, For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance. 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. We'll read on. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell.

I am hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, but to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

And so on. Verse 21, For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Words that are, I think you'll agree with me, truly extraordinary.

[ 1 : 16 ] A truly extraordinary statement, not just in itself, but when you think of the circumstances in which Paul made this statement.

It's not hard to imagine someone for whom everything is going well, and there are times like that. I'm sure there have been times like that, lots of them, in your own life, when you've been full of confidence, and when you've been full of elation, and when you're aware of the blessing and the prosperity of God, and when you would say things are going easily for you.

There are times like that, and where you might be confident enough to say, well, for me to live is Christ, and as far as I'm concerned, I'm able to face anything. But that wasn't the situation that Paul was in at all.

He was in a prison cell. Paul was stuck in a Roman prison, chained to a Roman soldier, waiting for his future to be decided by the Roman emperor, and that could have been life or death.

He could either be allowed to continue to live, or he could face the death penalty. It was one or the other, and these are not what you might call happy circumstances at all by any reckoning.

[ 2 : 29 ] Neither was it comfortable to remain in that place. And he may well have thought back to when he first went to Philippi, and how he had ended up there in jail, and how on that first evening, after being beaten, and being left in a prison cell, himself and Silas, and when they were singing to the Lord, and how there had been a prison itself, you'll remember in Acts 16, had been shaken to the core by an earthquake, and the doors had all opened, and the jailer, this prison officer, had wakened up out of his sleep, and had come to the very point of committing suicide himself, when from that point of great depth, through listening to Paul, he was converted.

The man had been set free. This time, things were not going to turn out like that. Paul was day after day, week after week, with no earthquake, no miracle, no sign, perhaps no feeling of the Lord's presence.

You know, there are times like that. Times when we are aware of God's presence, when we're particular in some mysterious way of God's presence, and other times when we're not.

And you know, these are the times that require great faith. I'm not saying the other times don't require, but these times require us to just come back to God's word, and to lay hold upon God's word alone, without the feelings, without the sense.

We all love to feel that sense of God's presence, which we have from time to time. Some people more than others, depending on circumstances and whatever. But very often, we don't feel that.

[ 4 : 08 ] Does that mean that we're not safe in Jesus? Does that mean that somehow God has abandoned us? Not at all. We come back to the same source of our encouragement, and the same

hope, and the promise that we have, which is God's word to us.

His promise. And a promise means a promise. God is always true to his promise. And in any case, this time, things were not going to be like that. Paul was facing a completely different set of circumstances.

Now, if I had been Paul, I would probably have been wondering, well, why is God? I don't understand. I possibly, I don't know, we're all given grace to face whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

And I'm tempted to say that if I had been Paul, I might have been writing very different words. I might have been wondering and questioning and wondering why God was allowing me to suffer so much in this prison cell.

But that's the opposite from what Paul is writing. If you look at this letter, you read through this letter, you're almost tempted to forget that he was actually in a prison when he writes so often of his confidence and his knowledge and his hope.

[ 5 : 14 ] And he looks forward to the future and his joy in the Lord. This is the most joyful peace in the whole of the scriptures. Full of joy. And that makes it so extraordinary when we remember that it was written in the darkness of a dungeon, in the damp conditions and the awful conditions, as you can well imagine, of a Roman jail.

And Paul says that as he is able to think and to work out for himself what has happened and how God has worked even those difficult, painful circumstances into the one thing that Paul wants more than anything else.

See, Paul doesn't take his joy from his circumstances. That's what we do, or we're apt to do. Particularly in a world where we're surrounded by luxury and freedom of choice.

We're apt to be happy when things are going well. And when we get what we want. Isn't that the case? At least it is with me. That we're happy when things are going well. But when everything is taken away from us, then that is when we are really tested.

And this is Paul being tested at this moment. And what does he say? Listen to this in verse 12. I want you to know, brothers, because they were facing testing times as well. And he needed to set an example for them.

[ 6 : 35 ] And so that they were able to focus on the example of the apostle. And they were to draw encouragement. That's why we're strengthened in the Bible. And how the Bible is used to strengthen us.

I want you to know, brothers, verse 12, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. Where does Paul get his joy from?

Where is it? What is it that fills Paul and encourages him and fills him with joy more than anything else? Well, I'll tell you, he tells us here. It is the knowledge that people are hearing the gospel.

Because he knows that as people hear the gospel, and as God works in their hearts and in their minds and lives, he knows that the gospel is the power of God to salvation. And he knows that one by one, people are being plucked out of darkness.

And God is transforming and changing lives and bringing them to know himself. That's what gives him joy more than anything else. There's nothing in all the world that compares, as far as the apostle Paul is concerned, to knowing that God is working and that the kingdom is progressing and that people are being saved.

[ 7 : 43 ] And that should be the same with us. And I fear, I fear it in myself, and I fear it in the world in which we live, that we're so wrapped up with our own materialism and our own luxuries and our own freedoms of choice and all that we have in this world, that we get sidetracked and distracted into finding joy and happiness in other places, rather than the one lasting source, which is Jesus Christ.

And I would like us tonight to come back to the Lord and ask that if there's anything that has taken the place of the gospel in our lives, to confess that it has become a God to us, and to ask the Lord to take it away and to give us that clear focus upon Jesus and him alone.

Yes, God has blessed us. God has blessed us with so many different things in this life, but where those very blessings have become distractions to us, we have to come to the Lord and ask us, ask him to rearrange your priorities so that Jesus is in the center, so that Jesus is on the throne, and so that we are able to say, for me to live is Christ.

For me to live is Christ. Well, Paul also knew that God was working all things to the good, to those who love. He said it on one other occasion in Romans chapter 8.

He knew it from his own experience. Here he's telling us once again in different words, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

[ 9 : 18 ] Paul had always wanted to come to Rome, and I can imagine that he anticipated traveling to Rome normally as a passenger, coming to Rome as a preacher, to exercise his own freedom of movement in the city.

That's not the way that God worked it out for him. Instead of coming to Rome as a preacher, he came as a prisoner. And all the circumstances in which all that had happened, it gives every appearance as if things had turned against him.

You remember how he had, at what appeared to be the very peak of his ministry, coming back from his third missionary journey, and all of a sudden, the whole world turned against him.

He was arrested, and he was taken away by the Romans. He was accused by the Jews. They plotted against him. And then eventually he appealed to Caesar, and he was put on a boat, and he was taken all the way.

You remember what happened even on the boat. There was a storm on the boat. His life came within a hair's breadth of being ended by the soldiers. But no, God was with him. And step by step, one day at a time, he eventually found his way.

[ 10 : 24 ] He was taken to Rome. That probably was the last way that he expected ever to come. And yet, that was always his wish and his prayer, that he would go to Rome, because he understood, he realized, he realized, the importance of Rome.

It was the very center of the Roman Empire. And yet, these were very different things. You see, God works in ways which are the opposite to what we expect.

And he shows us this, time after time. We always think we know what God is going to do. And yet, he often shows us how wrong we are. It's important to be shown that lesson.

And it was important for Paul, and it's important for us as well. Now he makes this great statement. As he considers where he is and what he's doing, the one thing he's able to do, of course, in a prison cell, is to think.

And, I don't know if you ever noticed reading through the letter to the Philippians, how often he uses the word mind. And you can well imagine that here he has little else to do but to think.

[ 11 : 27 ] But yet, look at the fruit. Look at what results out of this thinking process. He's able to write, and he's able to think about other people. And he's able to work out how God is moving and what God might do.

And he's, of course, as anyone would do with the threat of the death penalty hanging over them, he's wondering, well, what if? What if? What if it's one thing and what if it's another?

What if the verdict is that I be allowed to live? What does that mean for me? And what if the verdict is that I be allowed, that I be put to death? Well, what if? How is he going to face this very uncertain, this very uncertain position?

Well, here is where he makes this statement that we all love and that means so much to us. And I hope that every time we read it and every time that it inspires us, because this is God speaking to us, inspiring us and encouraging us to live exactly the same way.

We live in the same world as the Apostle Paul did. We face different challenges, but in a way they're similar. Are we able to say tonight, to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain?

[ 12 : 44 ] What did he mean by living? Well, as you know, his life on earth had always revolved around this one person, Jesus Christ.

that was not always the case. I should have said from the time he was converted on the road to Damascus. There was a day when he hated Jesus, when he would have done anything he could to eliminate his name from the earth.

That was until he personally met him, or I should say until Jesus personally met face to face with Jesus. And that was the day when this whole, you'll agree with me, of course, that there can't be a person in the whole of the history of humanity who changed so much as Saul of Tarsus when he met with Jesus Christ.

Beforehand, his life, he was bent on eliminating every semblance of the church and what they were doing and what they were preaching. And then he met with Jesus.

That was the day that his life turned around. And now, ever since that day, it's not as if he discovered simply that he was wrong in the past, but that in discovering Jesus, he discovered that his whole life had been pointing in the wrong direction.

[ 13 : 58 ] See, before that, he had been trying desperately to win the favor of God or to keep the favor of God so he thought by doing and doing and doing and keeping and keeping and keeping the law of God.

That's the way that the religious, legalistic mind works and Paul wasn't the first person to live like that and he wasn't the last person. There are plenty of people who live like that today, thinking that by doing, and by acting and by keeping all the rules as we see them that somehow or other we hope that God will receive us and God will show favor to us.

Nothing could be further from the truth and that's what Paul discovered on the road to Damascus, that despite all his attempts and his trying to win God's favor, he was reduced to nothing.

He had to confess that he was nothing but a hopeless, bankrupt sinner and there was nothing he could do to change that. But, he discovered that there was everything that Jesus had done to change that.

And when he discovered that the secret to the forgiveness of sins was not in what he did to win the favor of God, but that in what Jesus did to save him and to rescue him from his sin, that's what changed his life.

[ 15 : 16 ] So from then on, Jesus became the center of his being and what he had discovered himself, he wanted everyone to know. So great was this news and he knew that the way that God worked in a person's life was through the preaching and through the sharing of this incredible message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

I am not ashamed, he said, of the gospel of Jesus. It is the power of God. How did he know that? Because of the incredible change that had taken place in his own life and which he had been transformed from one person to another and he knew that God would do the same for others.

He knew that his life must now be immersed in sharing this gospel with others. Nobody in all the world had changed as radically as this man and he ends up from being a man who tries to win the favor of God to a man who said in Philippians 3 and verse 9, I want to be found in him, in Jesus, not having a righteousness of my own.

See, that's what he was trying to get all along, a righteousness of my own. Is that what you're trying to get tonight? Is that why you're doing your best and you're trusting in yourself and you think that hopefully one day that when things, when everything comes together, that hopefully your life will be better than the next person's life and on that basis that God will receive you.

That's what Paul thought and he was wrong. He was completely mistaken and Paul discovered that I don't want my own righteousness. I don't want it. It's rubbish.

[ 16 : 49 ] It's complete rubbish. That's what he called it, rubbish. Not having a righteousness of my own, but that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness of God that depends on faith.

Now let me ask you again, is that the righteousness you have? One which is given to you as the free gift of Jesus Christ. Our salvation is a gift. given to those who ask and only given.

It cannot be earned. It has to be given. And that's of course what Paul discovered in finding Jesus Christ and so for him Christ was the center of everything.

I want to ask you a question tonight. You've often been asked this. You've probably heard it from this pulpit often enough when someone's preaching on this text. When I say for me to live is Christ, what would your answer be?

For you to live is what? What is it? Many people in the world say for me to live is my business. There's nothing wrong with having a business.

[ 17 : 56 ] I had my own before I went into the ministry. Nothing wrong with that, but it wasn't my life. Many people say, well, for me to live is my sport. Nothing wrong with sport.

Many people are involved in it. It's good exercise, but I hope it's not your life. Many people will say, well, for me to live is my wife, my family. Of course, God wants us to have the things that he gives us, but Jesus says also that our love for our families and our wives, even our best friends, has to take second place when it comes to our love for him.

But for many people it's a confusion because you see what they have, they hold dearest to them, is their life. What do you hold dearest to you tonight? If you were to answer that question for me to live, well, for Paul there was absolutely no question at all, and I hope there's none for us.

I know that things get confused sometimes, and sometimes God is obscured from our lives, and we must come back to him, and we must get our perspectives and our priorities right. people would find that perhaps a crucial and a milestone in their own lives.

[ 19 : 17 ] You hear of people from time to time being miraculously rescued when it appeared as if they were going to die, then things change and things turn around by some twist of providence or what people call fate.

There is no such thing by some twist of providence. You hear about when there's an earthquake, for example, and where thousands of people get killed as walls and as buildings fall, and thousands of people are killed, and rescuers bring bodies out of the rubble.

You'll hear days later them finding someone alive. That person's taken out alive, one in a thousand, and that person is taken to hospital, and they recover.

And very often that person will say, well, I shouldn't be alive. It's a miracle. Why me? Why was I? Why was I just in that one spot where I was kept safe because two walls came together and they touched above my head, and even although I was trapped, I was allowed to live.

The person who was two feet away from me, he died. Why was I allowed to live? You know, these things happen. Maybe it's happened to yourself. And very often people are saying, people say in these kind of circumstances, well, I should be dead.

[ 20 : 30 ] And now, now my life will never be the same again. Having come so close to death, my life, however many years or days that are left, I'm going to make sure that it's never the same again.

Well, if that means by that, that they're going to seek the Lord, they're going to start reading the Bible, they're going to ask that God will save them and rescue them and change their lives, so be it. But if what that means is, well, I'm going to make sure that however long I live, I'm going to make the most of this life and make the best of it, that's unfortunate.

And that's a disaster. That's not what Paul said at all. For Paul, if he was allowed to live, life would be exactly the same as it always was.

Exactly the same. There would be no change. Because up until that moment, he had lived with this one objective of winning people for Christ. If God would allow him to live, it would be situation normal.

[ 21 : 30 ] It would mean that God had someone else for him to reach with the gospel. He had a further work for him to do. There'd be no change. Because everything, all things, work out for good. If he dies, it's God's doing.

If he lives, it's God's doing. And God takes away his people only when their work is finished on this earth. It's in God's hands.

Entirely in God's hands. And you know, that is such a comforting thought, isn't it? I hope it is anyway. That everything lies within the hands of God.

For the Christian, he knows that if God is for him, no one can be against him. And he knows that not a moment too soon, a moment too late, will he be taken from this world.

And that's what Paul knew as well. But he goes on to say, if saying to live as Christ was extraordinary, then to saying to die is gain is even more extraordinary, isn't it?

[ 22 : 29 ] What does he mean by to die is gain? He didn't mean I'm not afraid to die. There are plenty of people who say that. He didn't mean I have the confidence to look death in the face.

There are plenty of people who say that. He didn't mean I know that death is inevitable. Others before have had to go through this and I can't escape it. That's not what he's saying.

Other people have done that. He's not some kind of stoic that's had grittiest teeth and he's worked out, he's sat on a desk and he's thought about things, about life and the inevitability of death and that why should he be different from anyone else and younger people before him have died in accidents and by sickness.

These are the way many people, that's the way that many people look at death. That's inevitable. It is inevitable. There's no question about it. But for many people it's just simply nature taking its course. He's not just simply what they say reconciled to what's ahead of him.

You know people talk about that as if it's some kind of merit. I don't want to bring discomfort to you. I don't want to upset anyone but I hear people saying he's reconciled.

[ 23 : 41 ] If that means he's ready to die by believing in Jesus Christ then so be it. God be praised. But if what that means is that somehow he's convinced himself or she's convinced herself that oh well this is just an inevitability and all everything is going to come to nothing at the end.

Death is nothing. Then that person is wrong and they have deceived themselves because the Bible tells us that there is heaven and there is hell. There is life after death. There is no point in being reconciled if you've nothing to be reconciled about.

Let's talk instead of being ready to die. Ready to die. And by being ready to die believing in Jesus Christ there is no better way of being reconciled to the will of God.

But if what we mean by being reconciled is just our disposition and being simply resolved to what's ahead of us and gritting our teeth and saying oh well whatever will be will be that's not faith at all and it's nothing to be happy about.

If that person is not a believer. And it's not nothing to be happy about with ourselves either tonight if you're not a believer. I'm sure you've talked about it.

[ 24 : 57 ] You've thought about it. You've mulled it over. You've thought about it so many times. And perhaps you've kind of persuaded yourself into the way of thinking oh well I have to be reconciled.

That may give comfort to your relatives but it's not going to save you. It's not going to do a thing for you. Jesus is the only one who can really save you and make you ready for that day when it eventually comes.

So that's not what the apostle is saying at all. It's not just that he's reconciled. He's saying that he's saying this that for me he says to die will be an advantage for me.

Not for the world. Not for my friends. Not for my community. Not for the Romans who are keeping me in this prison. It will be an advantage for me. I will be personally better off if I die.

That's what the word gain means. It comes from the word that means to make a profit in business. There's profit and there's loss in business. And Paul he does this all the way through this letter.

[ 26 : 10 ] He talks about profit and loss. This is the one thing in which he will profit if he dies. Now that's what makes it a truly extraordinary statement isn't it? How can he possibly say that?

Is there anyone who naturally can say, can look at death in the face and not only say well I'm ready to die but for me it will be gain. That's what he says. It will be gain.

Well let me tell you why he says those. The time is running out. Let me tell you why he says that. He says that on the basis of two things. First of all he knows that the believer in Jesus, for the believer in Jesus' death is the immediate instant passing into the presence of God.

Look at what he says in verse 23 of the same chapter. I'm hard pressed to decide between, I'm hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart. Now here he's talking about his death.

My desire, look at how he describes his death. He describes it as departing from this world and being with Christ for that is far better. What does he mean by that?

[ 27 : 18 ] Because death is the death of the body. How can he talk about the body which dies and is buried in the earth and him departing at the same time. Is that not a contradiction?

No. Because in the hands of God, God takes a person and divides them if you like. And he takes your soul from your body. He takes your soul to depart from this world and the body is left to go into the grave.

Let me put it the way that no other place puts it as well as the catechism does in this explanation.

The souls of believers, says the catechism, the souls of believers, are at their death made perfect in holiness.

They do immediately pass into glory. And their bodies still united with Christ. They rest in the graves until the resurrection.

That's the second basis on which Paul makes this statement. I'll talk about that in a few moments time. But the first thing that happens is, you remember the thief on the cross. How do I know this? Well, because I go back to the crucifixion itself and the thief on the cross.

[ 28 : 22 ] You remember the thief after everybody mocked Jesus. And they all thought that they were in positions of authority over them. They had got him at last. And yet Jesus was even then and there.

He was working and winning people and changing them and saving them. The thief on the cross who turned and said, Lord, remember me when you enter your kingdom. And Jesus said, I tell you, today, today you will be with me in paradise.

Now that didn't make any logical sense, did it? Because the thief on the cross was facing inevitable death. And in a few moments time, that very day, his dead body would be taken from the cross. And it would be put in an unmarked grave.

And yet Jesus is promising him that despite that fact, that at the same time, that he would be with him in paradise.

What does that mean? It means that somehow or other, I don't know how it happens, but somehow or other, God is able to divide our souls from our bodies so that while the body is placed in the grave, a soul is immediately, you see, a person who's a believer doesn't experience death.

[ 29 : 31 ] We talk about experiencing death. If you're in Christ, you won't experience death. You know how I know that? Because Jesus promised, he said, I am the resurrection and the life. He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

And he that lives and believes in me will never die. You see, death for the, I'm not saying there isn't suffering. There sometimes is. I'm not saying there isn't lingering. There sometimes is.

I'm not saying there isn't an illness and darkness and all kinds of, there are some ways in which people die that I wouldn't like to have. Who knows what God's plan is for any one of us.

I'm not saying that people don't suffer. But when it comes to death, it's not an experience at all for the believer. It goes straight in. You know, there are some things that God does instantly.

I've often said that God's timing is not our timing. That God takes his time to do many things. He does. Sometimes we want things instantly. We live in a fast food society. We live in an instant society where we want things fast.

[ 30 : 30 ] We want it yesterday. And we have to learn time and again that God's ways are not our ways. That sometimes God requires us to wait for things. And he does things in his own time. But let me tell you this. There are some things that God does in a twinkling of an eye.

He's in a hurry to do it. And one of them is when he converts somebody, when he changes somebody. As soon as that person believes, as soon as that person comes to faith in Jesus, that person is a new believer, a new creation.

If any man be in Christ, he's raised from the dead instantly. Life is given to him. There's not a moment to lose in God's plan. And as soon as you believe, as soon as you believe in Jesus Christ, God will change your life in a moment.

You may not feel it. You may not be aware of it. But that's what happens to a person when they come to Jesus. The other thing that God does in a hurry is when he takes people to be with himself. There's not a moment to lose.

It happens in a microsecond. The souls of believers made perfect and holy to immediately pass into glory. And then the other basis on which he makes this statement is the fact that he knows that at the end of this world, on a day nobody knows when that day is going to be.

[ 31 : 39 ] Thousands of years after Paul said this, as it turns out. And we don't know how many more years there will be. Perhaps a few years in our experience. Perhaps thousands of years more.

At the conference I was at, there was a very amusing moment when somebody stood up and he said, I believe we're in the last days. I believe that we're in the last days. And somebody stood up and challenged him and said, how do you know that we're not in the first days?

How do you know that God has not got another 10,000 years in which to continue his work? We don't. We don't know when the end of the world is going to be. We don't know. Many people say they could be right.

They could be right that we may be in the last days. But they could also be wrong. I'm sure there are many times when Paul and the first apostles thought that they were in the last days. They were wrong. Jesus said, no one knows the day or the hour that the Son of Man will come.

He doesn't. We don't know. But Paul, for Paul, this was his great expectation that the day would come. He didn't know when it was going to be. That when Jesus would come again in his glory with his angels with him, the Bible tells us just as Jesus left this world, in the glory that he left this world on the cloud, he will come again.

[ 32 : 56 ] The dead in Christ will rise. The Bible also says that the dead who are outside of Christ will rise as well. We'll talk about that in a few moments time.

But that the dead in Christ will rise. And when Jesus comes, he will bring the souls of believers with him. They'll be reunited. By that stage, the earth, the world will have come to an end as we know it. Everything that we have lived for and put our hopes in, everything that has been so precious to us will have come to an end. It's hard to believe, isn't it? Because everything seems so permanent, so lasting.

It's not going to last. That's what Paul, that's what the Bible tells us. It's not going to last. It doesn't matter what people tell you. You have a choice this evening. You either listen to people, you either listen to what things appear, or you listen to God's word.

God tells us this world will come to an end, and Jesus will come again. And on that day, somehow the graves will be opened. I don't know how people who have been dead for thousands of years, and their bodies have decomposed, and perhaps even disintegrated altogether.

[ 34 : 01 ] There's no memory of them. Some of them are in unmarked graves. Some of them have disappeared altogether. And yet God will somehow reconstitute those bodies into glorified, glorious bodies, be reunited with the souls that he has taken away.

And they will go forever to be with the Lord. Well, the Bible tells us that there's the day of judgment, in which we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. But yet, those who have lived and died in Jesus Christ, to them Jesus will say, come.

You blessed of my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

And from that moment onwards, the Bible tells us that they will be with Christ, which is far better.

And even now, those who have been taken from us are tasting it in a measure.

It's not complete because the bodies aren't there. It's not complete. And yet, the taste, the experience, the place, a place we don't know much about.

[ 35 : 19 ] But we know this, that it is complete. It is perfect. There's no flaw. There's no serpent. There's no temptation. There's no frustration.

There's no sickness. There's no tiredness. There's no death. There are no lies. There's no violence. There's no deceit.

There is only the joy that God has prepared. The perfect, unbroken bliss that God has prepared and is preparing even right now for those who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Savior. As I said, the Bible tells us, Jesus tells us himself, that on that day, the graves of those who have believed in Jesus will be opened and those, they will hear the sound of his voice and go forever to be with the Lord.

But it tells us also that the graves of those who haven't believed in Jesus will be opened as well.

And they, Jesus tells us, read it for yourself. John chapter 5. Don't take my word for it. Read it for yourself.

[ 36 : 30 ] They will rise to be condemned. Because it's wrong of me to stand here and simply talk about heaven when there is also another place.

A place of darkness. A place of unbroken sorrow and shame and sadness and great regret. regret that you've never experienced in this world until then.

And the awful thing about it is, and I know that Kenny, I was talking about this last week. Who knows, but that what I'm saying is for a reason, I don't know who the Lord is speaking to tonight. There's no coming back.

It's a one-way journey. There's no coming back. So surely the question tonight is this, how can I make sure that when that day comes, that for me, death will be going to be with Jesus.

For me, death will be gained. There's only one answer. And that is to believe in Jesus Christ.

[ 37 : 48 ] to trust in him. To come personally to him and ask him to change you and to save you and to forgive you from all your sins and to make you into one of his own.

There's no other way and there is no other name given under heaven amongst men whereby we must be saved.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we once again want to acknowledge your own word and your own power.

And we pray, our Father, that you will work amongst us and apply your word to our hearts. Oh, Lord God, we need you. We need you more than ever. And we need you more than anything.

We ask, oh Lord, that you will make yourself known to each one of us, encourage those who know you, encourage each one of us to be able to say with the apostle, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

[ 39 : 02 ] But Lord, we pray also for those who cannot say that at this moment in time. And we pray that even by the end of the evening, that that will have changed. In Jesus' name.

Amen.