

The Mutual Gain of Christ and Christians in Their Life and Death.

by John Gill

Christ is the source of all believers' needs, wisdom, and salvation, and He brings them justification, redemption, and eternal life.

Scripture: Mark 10:30, John 11:25, Romans 8:32, Romans 14:8, 1 Corinthians 15:55-57, 2 Corinthians 5:8, Philippians 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:14, Hebrews 6:19, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Life in Christ", "The Gain of Death"

Description

John Gill preaches on the profound truth that for believers, life is centered around Christ and death is a gain, emphasizing that both living and dying serve to glorify Christ. He reflects on the life of Reverend Joseph Stennett, illustrating how his ministry was dedicated to Christ and how his death is a gain, not only for him but also for the glory of God. Gill explains that in life, Christ is everything to the believer, providing wisdom, righteousness, and redemption, while in death, believers are freed from sin and enter into eternal communion with Christ. The sermon encourages the congregation to find hope in the promise of eternal life and the joy of being with Christ after death.

Transcript

THE MUTUAL GAIN OF CHRIST AND
CHRISTIANS IN THEIR LIFE AND DEATH.

Occasioned By The Death Of The

Reverend Joseph Stennet, D. D.

Preached February 26, 1758.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is Gain.

THIS epistle, of which the words of my text are a part, was written by the apostle Paul, when a prisoner at Rome, to the church of Christ at Philippi. Philippi was a chief city of a part of Macedonia; or rather, a city of the first part of Macedonia,[1] and a colony of the Romans, at the time of the writing of this epistle. Hither

the gospel was brought in a very wonderful and extraordinary manner. The apostle Paul, and those with him, intended to have gone elsewhere, but were overruled and directed by divine providence, to steer their course to this place; where their ministry was succeeded to the conversion of Lydia and her household, and of the jailor and his; which two families, in all probability, said the foundation of a gospel-church-state in this city; on account of which it became more famous, than for its being rebuilt by Philip king of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, from whence it had its name of Philippi; or for the battle fought near it, between Augustus Caesar and Mark Anthony on one side, and Brutus and Cassius on the other, when the latter were beaten by the former; or for the fountains of water, or the veins and mines of gold, with which it abounded, which formerly gave it the names of Crenides and Dathos, and since Chrysopolis; by which name, or as vulgarly Grixopolis, it seems it is now called.[2] The church here was a well regulated one; it was in good order, and had its proper officers, bishops and deacons; one to take care of its spiritual, and the other of its temporal affairs.

The members of it are described as saints in Christ Jesus; they were in Christ, being chosen in him to be holy as well as happy; and who, being converted, had an open being in him; they were called with an holy calling, had principles of grace and holiness wrought in their hearts, and lived holy lives and conversations. The apostle had a very great regard for them; he remembered them in his prayers, in which he gave thanks to God for their constant fellowship in the gospel. He expresses his strong confidence of the work of grace being begun in them, and of the performance of it until the day of Christ; believing, in a judgment of charity, that they were partakers of the same grace with himself.

He declares the most strong and affectionate love to them, for the truth of which he appeals to God; and as an evidence of it prays for them, that they might increase in love, in spiritual knowledge, judgment, and sense; that they might be able to discern things that differ, and approve the most excellent; and that they might be upright and inoffensive in their conversation, abounding in the fruits of righteousness through Christ, to the glory of God. And whereas he was now in prison, he gives them an account of his bonds, and the usefulness of them; as that they were the means of spreading the gospel in many places, and even in Caesar's court, and of emboldening the ministers of it to preach it without the fear of man; though this they did from different principles, and with different views; some of envy, strife, and contention, and insincerely, thinking to add to the apostle's afflictions; others of good-will and of love to him, to the truth, and to the souls of men; knowing that he was set for the defense of the gospel.

However, whatever were their views, the apostle declares it was, and ever would be, matter of joy to him, that Christ was preached; yea, he was persuaded, that the ill designed to him by some, would be overruled for his good, through the prayers of the saints, and the supply of the Spirit; for he had a well-grounded hope, that Christ would be magnified in his body, living and dying; seeing he knew, that should he live longer, it would be for the glory of Christ, and the advancement of his interest in the world; and should he die quickly, his death would be gain, both to Christ and himself; since he should die for his sake, in the faith of him, and the profession of it, and should be forever with him; for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain These words may be considered, I.

As one proposition, and be read, for Christ is gain to me in life and in death; as they are in the margin of our Bible, and by some interpreters of great note.[3] According to this version of the words, Christ is the subject with respect to both parts, and the attribute is gain; and this he was to the apostle, both living and dying. 4 II. As two propositions, the subjects of which are life and death; and the respective predicates Christ and gain; and which partition of them is more agreeable to our version; I shall consider them in each view.

I. The words may be considered as expressive of the gain that Christ was, or would be to the apostle, both living and dying; and this is not to be limited and restrained to him as an apostle, who as such received his commission from Christ; had gifts and grace from him, qualifying him for that office; and by whom he was made successful in it, and profitable to the souls of men; and whereby he gained much credit and reputation among the churches of Christ: but is to be understood of him as a believer in Christ, in common with others; and it is true even of the meanest saint, that Christ is his gain in life and in death.

I use the words, believer and saint; for Christ is not gain to graceless persons, nor is he esteemed as such by them; they see no excellency in him, to distinguish him from another beloved; nor any comeliness in him, wherefore he should be desired by them; nor can they imagine that any profit or advantage will arise unto them by professing and serving him; or that any gain will accrue to them by attending his word, worship, and ordinances; but, on the contrary, that they would be losers in their character or substance; and therefore, like the Gergesenes, desire he would depart from them: especially it cannot be thought that Christ should be gainful to those that strip him of his proper deity; count his blood as common, or no other than that of a common man; despise and reject his righteousness, and deny his sacrifice, satisfaction and atonement; and are self-sufficient to be their own saviors: but he is gain to them that believe in him, and is so accounted by them; for to them he is precious: he is so to them who have a special and spiritual knowledge of him; who have an understanding given them, or the eyes of their understandings are opened and enlightened by the Spirit of God, to know him that is true; that he is the true God, truly and properly God, and in whom is eternal life; and that they are in him that is true; (1 John 5:20) are interested in him, and share in all the blessings of grace by him; who have such knowledge of him, of the glories of his person, and the riches of his grace, as that it is the beginning, pledge, and earnest of eternal life; and which knowledge, and the object known, are preferred by them to everything else, and all things are reckoned but loss in comparison thereof; and therefore are desirous of knowing more of him, of his person, office and grace; being willing to suffer the loss of all things, that they may win (Phil. 3:8, 10) or gain him, and a greater degree of knowledge of him.

Christ is gain, and reckoned gain to such who see him, and believe in him; who see the worth and value of him; the fullness of grace in him; the suitableness of him to lost sinners; and who, as poor perishing creatures without him, go to him, and venture their souls on him, trusting in him, who lay hold upon him by faith as the Lord their righteousness, their only Redeemer and Savior; who lean and rely upon him alone for salvation; commit their all into his hands, and expect all from him, grace here, and glory hereafter; and who not only have an interest in him, but are satisfied of it, that he is theirs, and they are his; their Lord and their God, who has loved them, and given himself for them; to such as these Christ must be gain, and he is so esteemed by them.

First, Christ is their gain in life: he is their to pan, everything to them, "their all in all;" he is everything to them they want, and all they need they find in him. He is their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; (1 Cor. 1:30) their wisdom, to guide and direct them; their righteousness, to justify them, and render them acceptable to God; their sanctification, to make them meet for eternal glory and happiness; and their redemption, to deliver and save them from all their enemies, sin, Satan, and the world.

He is their life, to quicken them, and to enable them to perform all the acts of spiritual life, and to entitle them to an eternal one; he is their light to enlighten them, and in whose light they view with pleasure all divine objects; he is their food they live upon, and by which they are nourished to everlasting life; and he is their raiment with which they are clothed; he is the source and spring of all their solid joy, peace, and comfort; and through an interest in him they have a right to all things pertaining to life and godliness; all

are theirs, Christ being theirs; and therefore they must be great gainers by him.

And how great their gain is, will appear by the following particulars. 1. He himself, his person, being theirs, he must be gain, and gain enough unto them; there being none among the sons of God in heaven to be compared to him, nor any among the mighty men on earth to be desired besides him. He is the chiefest among ten thousand; (Song 5:10) among ten thousand angels, or among ten thousand saints; being "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person;" he is the one and only Mediator between God and man, through whom they have access unto God, and in whom they have acceptance with him; he is their prophet, to teach and instruct them in all divine things; their priest, to make atonement for their sins, and intercession for their souls; their king, to rule and govern, protect and defend them: he stands in, and fills up all relations to them; is their indulgent father, loving husband, kind brother, and faithful friend; in all these he is gain unto them.

He is the pearl of great price, on whom no price can be set; he is more precious than rubies; and all the things that can be thought, spoken of, or desired, are not to be mentioned with him; the merchandise of him, the wisdom of God, is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. (Pro. 3:14, 15) 2. Not only Christ himself, but all other things of any value and importance, are theirs: Christ is the unspeakable gift of God unto them; and he is not given alone; God with him freely gives all things (Rom. 8:32) appertaining to their spiritual and everlasting life; they are blessed with all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3) in him; as with peace, pardon, righteousness, adoption, and eternal life; with all the sure mercies of David, the blessings of an everlasting and well ordered covenant; with all the stores of grace, and rich provisions of good things laid up in it; all the fullness of grace it has pleased the Father should dwell in him, is for their use; and out of it do they receive continually grace for grace; (Col. 1:19, John 1:16) or a large abundance of it, as they want it; and every need of theirs is supplied by their covenant God and Father, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:19) 3.

All the promises of the covenant of grace, and which are transcribed into the everlasting gospel, are theirs: godliness, true, real, powerful godliness, and those who are possessed of it, have promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; (1 Tim. 4:8) both as to things temporal and spiritual, and with respect to grace and glory; and these are all in Christ, yea, and amen; (2 Cor. 1:20) and those that believe in him, are heirs of them; have a right unto them, and claim upon them, and enjoy what is contained in them: and these are exceeding great and precious; they are like apples of gold in pictures of silver, and are more to be desired than thousands of gold and silver; and such that know the worth and value of them, will rejoice at them when they find them, and when they are applied unto them, as they that find a great spoil; (2 Pet. 1:4, Pro. 25:11, Ps. 119:72, 162) being suitable to their case, free and gracious, absolute and unconditional; and what give them immediate comfort and relief, and are of service to them in future times of difficulty and distress. 4.

Christ must needs be gain to those that know him, and believe in him, since high honors are conferred on them by him. Though they may, by embracing and professing him, lose their name, credit, and reputation among men, and be reckoned the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things; (1 Cor. 4:13) yet they are made by Christ kings and priests unto God and his Father; (Rev. 1:5) these two high and honorable characters are united in them; they are a royal priesthood. They are kings, not titular ones: they have now a kingdom of grace, which is within them, where grace reigns through righteousness over sin, Satan, and the world; and which lies in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and they are heirs of an everlasting one: they have a crown of life, righteousness, and glory hid up for them, and a throne of glory prepared and set up for them; even the same on which their Lord and Head, their Redeemer and Savior

sits, and they will sit with him on it: they fare like kings; they sit at the king's table, and partake of royal dainties: they are clothed like such: being related to Christ the King of kings; they are his queen, and stand at his right hand in gold of Ophir; their clothing is wrought gold, and raiment of needle-work: and they have the attendance of kings; angels are their life-guards; those ministering spirits minister to them who are heirs of salvation.

And they are priests; they have easy and ready access to God their Father, through Christ the Mediator, under the influence of one Spirit; and they have access with freedom and boldness; they can come to God through the blood of Christ with intrepidity, and with full assurance of faith; they can come without fear to God, and offer up their spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, and present themselves, souls and bodies, a holy, living, and acceptable sacrifice to him. This honour have all the saints. (Ps. 149:9) 5.

They are possessed of abundance of riches from Christ; everything in Christ is gain to them, even his very poverty; for through his poverty they are made rich; (2 Cor. 8:9) and how enriching then must his riches be! for all his riches are theirs; his riches, as the creator and governor of the world; the earth is his, and the fullness thereof, (Ps. 24:1) and all this belongs to his people; the world is theirs, he being theirs; they are heirs of it, as Abraham was; they have a rightful claim unto it, and possess as much of it as is for their good, and enjoy it in a manner others do not: the riches of grace, and the riches of glory, are theirs; the unsearchable riches of Christ, which can never be traced out, nor told over; the true, solid, and substantial riches, even durable riches, which will last forever, and can never be lost; and though believers in Christ may for his sake suffer the spoiling of their goods, and lose their worldly substance, yet in the issue they are no losers; they gain by their losses; for what they leave and lose for Christ's sake, they receive an hundred-fold now in this world, and in the world to come eternal life. (Mark 10:30) 6.

They obtain with Christ, and receive from him a glorious justifying righteousness; though they part with their own, they get a better; they are indeed obliged, upon their becoming the disciples of Christ, to deny righteous self, as well as sinful and civil self, for his sake: being convinced by the Spirit of God of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, to justify them in his fight; they drop it, they disclaim and renounce it, in point of dependence; they desire to be found not in their own righteousness, by which they see they cannot be justified before God; they perceive it is a garment too narrow to wrap themselves in, and therefore lay it aside as their robe of righteousness; but what do they lose thereby? only rags, and these filthy ones; which are of no more use to cover naked souls, and shelter them from the wrath of God, and avenging justice, than the aprons of fig-leaves were to our first parents, when they had sinned: and in the room of it they gain a better righteousness; not only a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the hypocritical scribes and pharisees; but even that exceeds the real holiness of saints, that new man which is created in righteousness and true holiness; yea, that exceeds the righteousness of the angels in heaven, and of Adam in a state of innocence; for it is not the righteousness of a creature, but the righteousness of God, which is unto and upon all them that believe; (Rom. 3:22) it is a righteousness as broad as the commandment is; it is every way commensurate to the righteous law of God, by which that is magnified and made honorable; by which justice is satisfied, and with which God is well pleased; it is an everlasting one, and will answer for the saints in a time to come; it acquits them now, and will hereafter; it secures from all condemnation and wrath, and entitles to eternal life. 7.

All that believe in Christ gain much by his blood and sacrifice: they have redemption through his blood, from all their iniquities; from the law, and all its curses; from Satan and his principalities and powers; from the world, and all their enemies; from hell, wrath, ruin, and destruction: and this they have, not through corruptible things, as silver and gold, but through the precious blood of Christ. By this likewise full

remission of sins is obtained, peace is made with God, and reconciliation for sin; this being also sprinkled on the conscience, speaks peace there, and purges it from dead works, and cleanses from all sin: by the sacrifice of Christ, sin is finished and made an end of; it is put away forever; and those that are sanctified, are perfected by it; which lays a foundation for solid joy, in all that have received the atonement; whose gain hereby is exceeding great. 8.

All that believe in Christ are, and shall be saved, with an everlasting salvation. Christ, as their surety, engaged to be the Savior of them; he came into this world in their nature for that purpose; and by his obedience, sufferings, and death, has obtained eternal salvation for them. This is in him, and in no other; nor is there any other person, or name, or thing under heaven, whereby any can be saved; it is in vain to expect it from hills and mountains; from any works of men, be they ever so numerous; but in Christ alone is the salvation of Israel: (Jer. 3:23) and they that believe in him, believe in him to the saving of the soul; and do at last receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls; the redemption of which is precious, as being of more worth than a world, and requires a price a creature cannot give: so that as on the one hand, it will be no profit or advantage to a man, should he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; (Matt. 16:26) on the other hand, he, whose soul is saved in the day of the Lord Jesus, and by him, must be thereby an infinite gainer. 9.

Once more let it be observed, that everything that belongs to Christ, or has any connection with him, is gain to the believer in him. The ministers of Christ are theirs, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, (1 Cor. 3:22) or whoever they be; they have a right to their ministrations, and they receive profit by them, for they speak unto them for exhortation, consolation, and edification; though they have not dominion over their faith, they are helpers of their joy; (2 Cor. 1:24) they are instruments of encouraging their faith and hope in God, and of increasing their spiritual knowledge and joy in the Lord.

The gospel of Christ, when mixed with faith by them that hear it, becomes profitable; when it is found and eat by faith, it is the rejoicing of the heart; it is soul-strengthening and comforting food to faith; and is esteemed by the believer more than the necessary food of his body. The ordinances of Christ are breasts of consolation, (Isa. 66:11) and afford much spiritual refreshment, when the presence of Christ is enjoyed in them: and the people of Christ are very beneficial one to another, by praying together, and building up one another on their most holy faith; by sympathizing with each other, conversing together, and relating their experiences to one another; all which makes their company delightful and profitable: to say no more under this head. 10.

The worst things of Christ, if any of his may be called bad, are gain to the saints, and are so esteemed by them; as reproaches for the sake of Christ and his gospel, and their profession of it; even these are reckoned by them greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: (Heb. 11:26) there are no afflictions befall the people of God, but they are gainers by them; their consolation abounds by Christ, as the sufferings of Christ abound in them; all their trials and exercises serve but to brighten their graces, particularly their faith, and make it to appear much more precious than gold that perisheth; (1 Pet. 1:7) their various afflictions work together for their good, either temporal or spiritual; and even work for them an exceeding and eternal weight of glory: (Rom. 8:28, 2 Cor. 4:17) and if these are so gainful and profitable to them, what must Christ's best things be! earthly kingdoms, crowns, thrones and scepters, are toys and trifles, in comparison of them.

Thus Christ is the believer's gain in life. Secondly, Christ is the gain of believer's in death, at it, and after it. When they die, they die in Christ: they have a secret being in Christ, as they are chosen in him before the

foundation of the world; and they have an open manifest being in him, when they are converted and made new creatures; they live in him as the branches do in the vine; and they continue in him, and through abiding in him, bring forth fruit as long as they live; and when they die, they are found in Christ, interested in him; and blessed are the dead that die in Lord; (Rev. 14:13) they are happy with him, enjoying everlasting peace and rest; falling asleep by death, they sleep in the arms of Jesus, and he will bring them with him at his second coming: the righteous, when they die, have hope in their death of enjoying eternal life and happiness; and this hope is founded on the person, blood and righteousness of Christ: he is in them the hope of glory; (Col. 1:27) the anchor of hope being cast on him, on such good ground, on so sure a foundation, is in itself sure and stedfast, (Heb. 6:19) and enters within the veil where Jesus is; it is a hope that makes not ashamed, or disappoints; salvation follows upon it.

These also die in the faith of Christ; and as in life, the triumph of that grace arises from what Christ is to his people, and has done and suffered for them, from his death, resurrection ascension to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, and intercession for them; so when they come to die, what gives them reason to sing and say, O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? is, that Christ has took away the sting of death, sin, and has fulfilled and satisfied the law, the strength of sin; (1 Cor. 15:55-57) so that there is nothing lies against them to their condemnation.

Moreover, their expectation in their dying moments is to be with Christ, and with whom they are desirous to be; and choose to be absent from the body, that they might be present with the Lord; (2 Cor. 5:8) and they are immediately with him, as soon as soul and body are separated: and this is their comfort, both in life and at death, that they shall be forever with him; and when they are departed, their happiness at and after death lies in communion with Christ, in conformity to him, and in the everlasting vision of him.

Communion with Christ is a most delightful and desirable thing; the believer reckons it great gain to him, when he can say, truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, (1 John 1:7) which yet is imperfect, and but for a season; what gain will that be which will be forever and uninterrupted, that is entered upon at death! Now the saints are like to Christ, but it is but in part; they are gradually changed into his image from glory to glory; (2 Cor. 3:18) but at death, and as soon as in glory, this image will be perfect and complete; and in the resurrection, it will be so both in soul and body.

In the present state of things, we see but in part, and through a glass darkly; (1 Cor. 13:9, 12) but, in the other state, when death has done its office, we shall see Christ as he is, as well as be like him. A principal part of the saints happiness, will lie in beholding his glory, and gazing at it, and feeding the eyes of the mind upon it with unutterable pleasure; which to enjoy, is the ultimate end of our Lord's sufferings here, and of his preparations and intercession in heaven.

But, II. I shall now proceed to consider these words as consisting of two propositions: first, that to live is Christ, or life is Christ; it is to and for him: secondly, that death is gain both to him and to his saints. First, That to live is Christ, or that the tendency of the apostle's life, which is the design of the expression, was to the service, honor, and glory of Christ; for not Christ, but life, or to live, is the subject of this proposition;[4] Christ is the predicate.

Wherefore, 1st, The sense is not, that life is owing to Christ, or that he is the cause and author of it; though this is true; for as he is the creator of men, in him was life, and that life was the light of men; (John 1:4) he it is that gives life and breath to all in a natural sense; as all have their being from him, they are preserved and upheld in it by him; they live, move, and have their being in him. Saints have their spiritual life from

Christ; he quickens the dead in sin, even whom he pleases; he is the resurrection and the life, (John 11:25) or the author of the resurrection from the death of sin, to a life of grace; he speaks life into dead sinners, and implants in them a principle of it, and maintains it: he is also the procurer and giver of eternal life; he has given his flesh, his human nature, for the life, the eternal life of the world, (John 6:51) of his chosen ones; and he has power to give it to as many as the Father has given him; and to them he does give it, and they shall never perish: he is the way, the truth, and the life; (John 17:2, and 10:28 and 14:6) the true way to eternal life, yea he is eternal life itself; it will consist in the everlasting enjoyment of him; but this is not the meaning of the expression here.

Nor, 2dly, Is it the sense of the phrase, that Christ is the object of spiritual life; though this also is true: a believer lives by faith on Christ; on his person for acceptance; on his blood for pardon; and on his righteousness for justification: he lives upon him as the bread of life, and lives by him; his spiritual life is supported and maintained through feeding on him by faith; and as it was the desire of our apostle, so it is of every believer, that the life he lives in the flesh should be by the faith in the Son of God (Gal. 2:20).

But, 3dly, The meaning is, that Christ was the end of the apostle's life, the scope and aim of it; his main view, whilst he lived, was to serve and glorify him, and promote his honor and interest. This had been his constant care and study for time past; and it was his resolution still, should he be continued longer, to live to Christ; and it was his firm persuasion, that this would be the issue of his future toil and labor in his ministry, or of his sufferings; he was well assured Christ would be magnified hereby, as it was his hearty desire that he should: and it becomes every good man, whether a minister of the word, or a private christian, to seek the glory of Christ throughout the whole of his life, and make this the end of his living, that whether we live, we live unto the Lord; (Rom. 14:8) and the love of Christ, in assuming our nature, in suffering and dying in our room and stead, and thereby obtaining eternal redemption for us, should constrain and engage us not to live unto ourselves, but unto him that died for us, and rose again: (2 Cor. 5:14, 15) particularly a minister of the gospel may be said to live to Christ, or to have his life devoted to his service and interest, when, 1.

He preaches Christ, and him only, at least principally; when he is the subject-matter of his ministry; and when all things in it tend to this one point, and center in it, or have a connection with it; when the drift of all his discourses is to magnify Christ; to set off the glories of his person, and the riches of his grace: and this was the way of preaching the apostles of Christ, and first ministers of the word, universally gave into; we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord: (2 Cor. 4:5) and for this our apostle was remarkably eminent and famous; I determined, says he, not to know, that is, not to make known, anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified; (1 Cor. 2:2) and this resolution he pursued, and by this determination he abode, notwithstanding the clamors and cavils of the Jewish doctors against it, and the sneers of the wise philosophers of the age at it; we preach, says he, Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness: (1 Cor. 1:23) and this is done when he is declared to be God over all blessed for ever; and that all divine perfections are in him; that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him; that he is in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with him; (Rom. 9:5, Col. 2:9, Phil. 2:6) having the same nature and attributes; the same glorious names and titles; the same works being done by him, and the same worship and homage given to him.

When he is set forth in all his offices, as the surety that engaged to take upon him the nature of his people, to pay their debts, and satisfy for their sins, and save their souls; as the Savior and Redeemer of them from all their sins, and the sad effects of them; as their only Mediator, who transacts all affairs for them, between God and them; as their prophet, to whose instructions, relating to doctrine and worship, they are

to attend; as their priest, who has offered himself without spot to God for them, appears in the presence of God on their account, and ever lives to make intercession for them; and as their king, to whom they recommend subjection as such, and obedience to all his commands and ordinances.

When also they preach up the benefits and blessings of grace which come by him; as that the acceptance of men with God is not on the account of any works of righteousness done by them, but in Christ his beloved Son, and on account of what he has done and suffered for them; and that justification is not by the works of the law, moral or ceremonial, but by the righteousness of Christ imputed, without works; or by faith in that righteousness, without the works of the law; that pardon of sin is not through the tears, repentance, and humiliations of men, but by the blood of Christ; for without shedding of blood, be there what will else, there is no remission; (Heb. 9:22) that adoption, which is from the good-will and pleasure of God, is founded on relation to the person of Christ, and comes through the redemption that is in him; and that the power, privilege, and authority to claim that blessing, is a gift of his to those that believe in him; and that eternal life itself; is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23). 2.

Then is the life of a minister devoted to the service and glory of Christ, when he studies carefully and constantly to preach the whole gospel of Christ, and nothing else; as our apostle did, who kept back nothing that was profitable to the souls of men, and shunned not to declare all the counsel of God; (Acts 20:20, 27) even that gospel which has Christ for its author as a divine person, and Christ for its subject as the God-man and Mediator, and which was preached by him in the days of his flesh, as it never was by any before or since; and all the doctrines of it; relating to his person, offices, and grace; such as the election of persons in him; of redemption by him; of justification by his imputed righteousness; of pardon by his blood; of atonement by his sacrifice; of regeneration and sanctification by his Spirit and grace; and of perseverance through him in faith and holiness.

And then is the life of Christ's faithful ministers spent in his service, and makes for his glory; when they constantly, openly, and without reserve, affirm these things, and continue in them; when they make it the business of their lives to disuse the favor of the knowledge of them wherever they come; as this our apostle did, who from Jerusalem, round about to Illyricum, fully preached the gospel of Christ: (Rom. 15:19) and when they, according to the utmost of their abilities, both from the pulpit and the press, defend the important truths of it; and contribute all they can to the spread of them far and near; by their exhortations to fellow-ministers, by their influence and example, and every other way they are capable of.

As well as when they are useful to the churches and congregations where they are placed, for their edification and comfort; for the improvement of them in spiritual knowledge; and for the furtherance of faith, and the joy of it; as the apostle here was persuaded would be his case with respect to the Philippians; see ver. 24-26. 3. Then is a minister's life directed to the honor and glory of Christ; when his conversation in the world, and in the church, is as becomes the gospel of Christ, he professes and preaches; when he walks uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel, and the rule of the divine word; when he walks as he has Christ for his pattern and example; and so behaves as to be himself an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; (1 Tim. 4:12) in short, when he discharges the duties of his office faithfully, both with respect to God and man; and when all the reproaches and persecutions of men do not deter him from it; when none of these things move him, neither does he count his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course with joy, and the ministry he has received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God; (Acts 20:24) nay, so far from it, that he rejoices that he is counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ: (Acts 5:41) and thus on his part Christ is glorified; though on the part of others he is evil spoken of: (1 Pet. 4:14) so that upon

the whole, such an active and suffering life is Christ; or what makes for his glory, and the promotion of his cause and interest in the world.

Secondly, The other proposition is, that to die is gain; but to whom? both to Christ, and to all good men, whether ministers or private christians, that believe in him: this is not expressed, but is to be understood. 1st, The death of good men, particularly ministers of the gospel, is gain to Christ: which sense of the words best agrees with the persuasion of the apostle, that Christ would be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death, ver. 20, seeing, should he live longer, his busy and laborious life would be for the glory of Christ; and should he die, even soon, that would also turn to the honor of him, and so be his gain; for which reason with others, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints; (Ps. 116:15) whether it is in the way of martyrdom, or in the common way.

In the former way it was that the apostle's death was gain to Christ; for in this way he died, and thereby Christ was magnified; as he was by Peter, who died in like manner; as Christ suggested he should, when he signified to him by what death he should glorify God: (John 21:19) and O how is God glorified, and Christ magnified, by his suffering servants, and his honor and interest in the world promoted thereby! as it was in the primitive times, under the persecutions of the Roman emperors, when the apostles and many others, were called to seal the doctrines of Christ with their blood; which was a great confirmation of the truth of them, and of their unfeigned faith in them; and served greatly to establish the minds of weak believers, and animate others to suffer in the same manner; and was indeed an ordinance for the conversion of many; who seeing their zeal for Christ; their undauntedness and intrepidity: their courage and resolution; their constant profession of Christ unto death; were won over to him, and so were his gain: additions were made hereby to his churches; his interest was increased; his kingdom promoted and enlarged; "the blood of the martyrs being, as it was usually said, the seed of the church;" and as it was then, so it has been in some ages since, particularly at the Reformation.

Moreover, the death of the saints in the common way of dying, especially of gospel-ministers, is gain to Christ, and brings him honor and glory; when they continue in, and abide by his doctrines, even unto death; when they declare in their dying moments, that what they have preached to others are their only support, and continue to recommend them to them; when they speak of the sweetness they find in them, and the comfort they have from them; relate the choice experiences of divine love and grace they are favored with; and express their strong and well-grounded hope of heaven and happiness, upon that foundation they have directed others to; and rejoice in this hope of the glory of God: as all this tends to establish and confirm those that survive, so it makes greatly for the Redeemer's glory, which is his gain. 2dly, The death of the saints, particularly of faithful ministers of the word, is gain to themselves: and so the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions, by way of explanation, add, to me; rendering the words, to die, or if I die, it is or will be gain to me.

What is death! or what is there in death that can be gainful! it is a departure out of this world, as may be learnt from the context; a taking a long journey; a going to a man's long home; never to return here again, to his house, his family, and friends; or to be in the same station and situation he now is. It is a dissolution of the earthly house of this tabernacle; an unpinning it, and a taking it to pieces; a disunion of the soul and body; a parting those two near and intimate companions, that have dwelt long together; for the body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26).

Death changes a man's countenance; breaks the frame of nature; deprives of all sense and motion; and renders all the active members of the body useless; and turns comeliness into corruption, and the whole

mass and bulk into rottenness, dust, and worms; and what gain can there be in all this? yea, there is much a man loses by death, and yet it is said to be his gain:[5] he parts with his dearest relations and friends; he leaves them behind; he loses all relation to them, and connection with them; he is no more the husband, father, brother, etc. he loses all knowledge of the affairs of this world; he knows nothing what is done below after death; what befalls his family or his friends; whether to their advantage or disadvantage; as Job says, his sons come to honor, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them: (Job 14:21) he loses all his grandeur, in which he lived among men; all his titles of honor, and all his glory; these shall not descend after him (Ps. 49:17) to the grave: he loses all his worldly estates, his substance, wealth, and riches; he carries nothing away with him; when his soul is required of him, and the question is, whose shall those things be (Luke 12:20) he has enjoyed? the answer must be, whoseever they are, they are no more his; he has lost his property in them, and his possession of them: yea, dying he has lost his life, his animal life, than which nothing is dearer to a man; skin for skin, yea all that a man hath will he give for his life: (Rom. 7:24) now what is that at a good man's death, that can counterbalance all this loss or rather over-balance it, to make it gain to him? and that it is gain, notwithstanding all this loss, will appear by considering the following things: 1.

What a good man, whether in a public or private capacity, is then rid of and freed from: he is at death freed from sin and the riddance of that is gain unto him; he is now freed from obligation to punishment for it by the death of Christ; and he is clear of the guilt of it before God, and on his own conscience, by the blood of sprinkling; and he is delivered from the dominion of it by the power and grace of God, but not from the being of it; he groans, being burdened with it; it causes a continual conflict and war in him; and he is sometimes carried captive by it, which makes him cry out, O wretched man that I am: (Rom. 7:24) but when a saint dies, he is immediately among the spirits of just men made perfect, and is as they; those sins and corruptions, which like the old Canaanites to Israel, were thorns in his side, and pricks in his eyes, are no more; the Canaanite is no more in the land, nor any pricking brier, nor grieving thorn of this sort; all are gone; and therefore death must be gain unto him.

Likewise he is freed from the temptations of Satan: now though he is redeemed from him by the death of Christ, and taken out of his hands by powerful and efficacious grace; yet he is subject to his temptations, as the best of men are: he solicits them to evil; suggests bad things to them; throws in his fiery darts; is always going about to seek an advantage against them, and accuse them before God; and though he cannot devour, he studies to distress and terrify; and sometimes he does it by injecting fears of death, which keep some in bondage all their days: but when once they are removed from hence, got over Jordan's river, are safe landed on the shores of eternity, and are in Abraham's bosom, and in the arms of Jesus, they are out of his reach; he is fallen from heaven, and will never regain his place there anymore; there is no tempter in the heavenly paradise.

This is another branch of the believer's gain at death. Likewise, then he will no more walk in darkness, or be liable to divine desertions, and the trouble that arises from thence; nor be attended with doubts and fears, as he often is now; lest God should not be his God, and Jesus his Redeemer; lest the good work of grace should not be begun in him, or he should fall short of heaven and eternal happiness: nor will he be any more afflicted with an evil heart of unbelief, or distressed with that sin which so easily besets him; all sorrow and sighing on every occasion shall flee away, and everlasting joy be upon him: he will be no more troubled with diseases and pains of body; with outward calamities and afflictions; with reproaches and persecutions; with toil and labor of any sort, but be in perfect ease and rest; so that it may be truly said, happy are the dead which are already dead, more than the living that are yet alive. (Eccl. 4:2) Yea, the

body by dying will be a gainer; for at the resurrection-morn, though it has been vile, base, and contemptible, it will be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ; and though it is sown in the grave in weakness, in dishonor, in corruption, and a natural body; it will be raised in power, in glory, in incorruption, and a spiritual body; this mortal will put on immortality, and this corruption incorruption; so that the gain will be very great.

This will be further manifest, if we consider, 2. What the believer, whether a minister of the word or a private christian, enjoys at death, and upon it: he is immediately in better company than what he leaves behind; he is at once with angels and glorified saints; and joins with them in their acts of devotion, service, and worship, in celebrating the perfections of God, and singing Hallelujahs to the Lamb: he enters directly into the presence of God; beholds the face of God, and the glory of Christ, and has fellowship with Father, Son, and Spirit; and God, in all his persons, is all in all to him, and is his portion, inheritance, and exceeding great reward.

He then is possessed perfect knowledge, which before he had only in part; perfect knowledge of God; of Christ; of the covenant; of the mysteries of grace; of the wonders of providence; of things which his eye had never seen, nor his ear heard, nor had it entered into his heart to conceive of; and what he had seen but darkly, and known imperfectly, now he has full, clear, and distinct ideas of. Moreover, he is now arrived to complete holiness; before he was black in himself, and full of spots, but now without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; before he was only in part sanctified, now throughout, in every power and faculty of his soul; the work is now completely finished; and there are not the least remains of sin and corruption in him.

He is now in fullness of joy, and partaking of pleasures that will never end; he had only some tastes before of joy unspeakable, and full of glory, but now he drinks large draughts, even to satiety, of the river of divine pleasures; and where he bathes himself with unutterable delight, and with a satisfaction not to be expressed. In short, he is now received into everlasting habitations, into the mansions of bliss and glory in Christ's Father's house; and enters upon the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and which fadeth not away; and enjoys the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world; has the crown of righteousness laid up for him, given him; and is set down with Christ upon his throne, possessed of honor, glory, immortality, and eternal life.

All this is true, and may be said of our deceased Friend and Brother, whose death has occasioned this discourse. His life, whilst it was continued, was to Christ; to the glory of his name, and the good of his interest; and, had it been continued longer, would doubtless have been for the service of the Redeemer's cause in general, and for the advantage of this church of Christ in particular, and for the benefit of the poor ministers of Christ, to many of whom he was greatly serviceable; and of the poor members of Christ in various places, who were assisted by him when in distressed circumstances, or injured and oppressed by their fellow-creatures; who will very sensibly feel the loss of him.

But to die is his gain; who now enjoys all the above advantages of dying in the Lord; and in whose death Christ has been glorified, in supporting him in the views of it, and in carrying him so comfortably and cheerfully through the pains and agonies of it; so that Christ has been magnified in his body, both in life and in death: an account of whom I am now to give; a task, I fear, I am not equal to, so as to do justice to the memory of so great a man. Dr. JOSEPH STENNETT was the eldest son of that eminent and learned divine, Mr.

Joseph Stennett, whose character has been drawn by an able hand;[6] and is otherwise so well known from his excellent writings, as will preserve his memory in high esteem to late posterity. His father also, Mr. Edward Stennett, was a faithful and laborious minister of the Baptist denomination, at Wallingford in Berkshire; and suffered much for nonconformity in persecuting times. The Doctor was born in London, Nov. 6, 1692; and received his instructions in grammar and classical learning, from two of the ablest grammarians this age has produced Mr.

Ainsworth, author of the Latin Dictionary; and Dr. Ward, Professor of Rhetoric in Gresham-College. The other parts of literature, which more immediately related to his sacred profession, he cultivated under the care and direction of his learned and pious father; whom I find on his dying-bed, giving him advice with respect to the management of his studies, and the conduct of his future life.[7] His fine natural parts, acquired knowledge, and above all the grace of God, and the eminent gifts of it bestowed upon him, and fitting him for public service, all contributed to form his character; in whom the gentleman, the scholar, the christian, and the divine, were so happily united.

When he was about fifteen years of age, he made a profession of religion, and submitted to the ordinance of baptism. And those who have either heard his pious discourses, and fervent prayers; or read his excellent sermons, which are printed; can have no doubt left upon their minds, of his having received the grace of God in truth; which is so absolutely necessary to a minister of the gospel. In the year 1714, Providence called him into Wales, where he first entered upon his public ministry, and spent about four years at Abergavenny in Monmouthshire; from whence, having declined the pressing invitations of two congregations in this city, he removed to Exeter, not long after the dispute arose in that country concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and while it was hot there: letters having been sent hither for advice, in the year 1719, occasioned great disturbances and animosities among Protestant-dissenting ministers of all denominations in this city.

In the meantime our young divine, as he then was, exerted himself with an uncommon and distinguished zeal at Exeter; made a noble stand for the proper divinity of our Lord, and appeared with great luster and brightness in the defense of it. Here he continued about sixteen years, faithfully discharging his ministerial trust, and adorning his office with a becoming life and conversation. In 1737, he was called to the pastoral care of this church, and was invested with that office September 15th the same year, being twenty years ago and upwards: so that he continued in the sacred work of the ministry about forty years.

In the year 1754 he received a diploma creating him Doctor in Divinity, from the University of St Andrews in Scotland, at the instance and recommendation of his Royal Highness their Chancellor; who was pleased to send it to him in a very obliging manner by his Secretary. The Doctor's ministerial abilities and qualifications are so well known, as to want no description or commendation of them. His mein and deportment in the pulpit were graceful; his voice low, but soft and pleasant; and his language accurate and correct.

He had a large compass of thought, freedom of expression, and fervency of soul, as well in preaching as prayer; and would often treat his subject in a very comprehensive view, to the great delight, as well as profit, of his hearers. As to his religious principles, besides those concerning baptism and the sabbath, wherein he differed from many; there were others of greater importance, the doctrines of our first reformers, which he imbibed in his younger years, and abode by them throughout his ministrations to the end of his life.

I meet with an instance of this in a letter sent by him to the members of this church, about two months before his decease, wherein are the following expressions: "It is my great comfort in the views of eternity, that I have been led in these changeable sad times, steadily and constantly to maintain those doctrines, which I find are able to support me at such a reason as this. I call my dear charge at Exeter, where I spent the first part of my ministry (and the Lord knows in great weakness) to testify this concerning me.

I always thought, the great design of the gospel was to lay the creature in the dust, and to exalt the great redeemer of the church. I always taught both them and you to love Jesus Christ; to live upon him; and to expect your justification from him alone, his blood, his righteousness imputed, and his intercession." With regard to his political character, he was a warm asserter and defender of the liberties of mankind; most zealously attached to the interest of his Majesty King GEORGE, and his royal house; heartily loved his friends, and all whom his Majesty esteemed as such; and was greatly offended with those, who gave into an unreasonable opposition to his ministry.

His talents for public service in civil affairs, were discerned by some persons of the first rank and eminency, who were pleased to honor him with their friendship and acquaintance. And the easy access which this gave him to those in power, rendered him capable of performing many good and kind offices to multitudes of persons; which he attended to with great cheerfulness and assiduity, and frequently with happy success. So that his death is a public loss to mankind; particularly to the whole Dissenting-interest, and especially with respect to its civil and political affairs.

The disorder, which issued in his death, was a mortification in his foot, under which he labored near six months. During which time, though it appeared very frightful and terrible to those about him; yet it was not at all startling and surprising to himself. When he was first made acquainted with it, and it was intimated to him, that he might be carried off by it in a few days; he received the summons with an amazing composure of mind. And through the whole of his affliction, he showed such christian heroism, as astonished some who were strangers to the inward power of christianity, and obliged them to acknowledge its divine influence.

His patience under those excruciating pains with which he was attended, was almost inimitable; not one murmuring or repining word being heard to drop from his lips amidst all of them. And when he had any intervals from pain, it is thought, he never so much enjoyed himself, his family, and his friends about him, in any period of his life, as he then did. This serenity and cheerfulness continued with scarce any interruption. And though he had not those raptures, which some have experienced on their dying beds, and in their last moments; yet his faith continued unshaken, and his hope firm and steadfast to the end.

Thus your dear and faithful pastor finished his course, and fell asleep in Jesus, on the 7th instant;[8] leaving behind him a very disconsolate widow and mournful family, all deeply affected with their great and irreparable loss. During his illness, though at such a distance, he was not unmindful of this church, his more peculiar charge and care; as appears by his letter to you, in which he says: "Sometimes, I think, I could rejoice to talk to you once more of the loving-kindness of the Lord, and what he has done for my soul; and to recommend that dear Jesus, with all the blessing of his salvation, to your precious souls, which I have often sincerely, though poorly, done in the course of my ministry."

And now, in your present circumstances, permit me to remind you of your duty, how you should behave under them. And this I shall choose to do, not in my own words, but those of your late pastor, in his letter above-mentioned; which may, I would hope, make greater and more lasting impressions on you, than

anything I am capable of saying: "My dear brethren, says he, let your love abound one towards another; forbearing one another, forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Exercise your charity to all men, in the manner in which the gospel recommends it.--Brethren, as you would have your souls prosper, labor to maintain holy discipline in the church; attend early and constantly on the public worship of God; and cultivate the duties of religion in your families and your closets. See that the generous spirit, that has long prevailed among you for the support and encouragement of the interest of our Lord Jesus Christ, may not decay; be exemplary in your conversation; and use your kind endeavors to restore such as are departed from the truth, or by an unholy walk have brought themselves under the censure of the church."

My friends, frequently read over these instructions and exhortations; and though your pastor is now dead, you will perceive that he yet speaks to you, with the most tender regard, for your truest and best interest. To you, the dear relations of the deceased, his mourning widow and sorrowing children, and other relations and friends, what shall I say? The stroke upon you is heavy; the providence is very afflicting. The loss of such an indulgent husband, tender father, kind brother, amiable relation, and loving friend, is a great one indeed! but sorrow not in an extravagant and unbecoming manner, as those without hope of a future state, and a glorious resurrection.

Remember what is your loss is his gain; and that you will see your husband, your father, your brother, your relation and friend again, to greater advantage than ever you saw or enjoyed him here; for if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also, which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him (1 Thess. 4:14). FOOTNOTES:

[1] So the words in Acts 16:12, may be rendered, as they are by Castalio, if instead of *prwth thv*, we read *prwthv*, and which version agrees with the history of the place: for according to Livy, 50:45. 100:29. Macedonia, when conquered by Paulus AEmilius, was divided into four parts, and the first part was between Stryman and Nessus; where Pomponius Mela, 50:2. 100:9, places Philippi: and Jerom. De loc. Hebr. fol. 96. G. expressly says, "Philippi is a city in the first part of Macedonia" and it was not the chief city of that part, but Amphipolis, according to Livy in the place referred to; nor was it the first city the apostle and his friends came to, but Neapolis, as appears from ver. 11. though Photius, Ep. 247. says, "Philippi was the metropolis of the province of Macedonia;" as perhaps it might be in his time. See Pierce's Synops. Ep. Philip. p. 2, 3.

[2] Vid. Zanchii Prolegomena in Epist. ad Philip.

[3] Ego autem Christum in utroque membro orationis facio subjectum, ut tam in vita, quam in morte, lucrum esse praedicetur, Calvin in loc. Sic Beza & Gomarus.

[4] To zhn Crisov, vivere, Christus. Articulus, nota subjecti, ut mox iterum. Quicquid vivo, (vita naturali) Christum vivo. Bengelius in loc.

[5] To apwqanein kerdov. Mori, lucrum. Quamvis moriens videar omnium rerum jacturam facere. Bengelius in loc.

[6] See the Account of his Life, prefixed to his works.

[7] See the Account of his Life, prefixed to his works, p. 34.

[8] February 1758.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-gill/the-mutual-gain-of-christ-and-christians-in-their-life-and-death/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net