

For Me to Live Is Christ

by John Hunter

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living for Christ and making Him great to others, and how this can be achieved through a deepening longing to know Him and His power.

Duration: 38:48

Scripture: Romans 8:18, Ephesians 3:19, Philippians 1:21, Philippians 2:5, Philippians 3:10, Philippians 3:13, Philippians 4:12-13

Topics: "Living For Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by challenging the idea that things would go better if God laid a person aside. He uses the example of Peter walking on water to illustrate the power of faith and the potential for greatness in serving Christ. The speaker then shifts to the apostle Paul, who was in prison when he wrote about living for Christ. Despite his circumstances, Paul had a deep longing to know Christ more intimately and to make sacrifices for the faith of others. The sermon emphasizes the importance of developing the mind of Christ and having a personal relationship with Him.

Transcript

Philippians 1 verse 21, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. For to me to live, Christ, to die, gain. Thus there is indicated to us the passion of Paul, the consuming desire of his heart, that while he lives, it might be an expression, a manifestation, a magnitude of Christ.

And if the moment came that he should die, then he considered that that would be gain beyond measure. Very much better to be with Christ. I'm quite certain that all of us are happy about the first part of the text.

To me to live, Christ. I don't know how many of us would be so happy about the second part. That we do reckon in our souls that to die is gain.

Throughout this epistle Paul is making statements like this. I'll pick one out just for a moment from each chapter. Here he says, for to me, it's personal, it's individual, it is intimate, it is private.

For to me, to live, Christ. When you come to chapter 2, he speaks to them like this. He says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

And he introduces one of the great Christological passages. A passage profound in statement. As he traces the Son of God from Godhead glory to the death of the cross and ultimately back to heaven.

But you'll notice it's placed, the declaration of Christ, in a practical setting. It's in order that you and I might develop the mind of Christ. Who was prepared to make ultimate sacrifice that others might be blessed.

And when you come down to verse 17, Paul shows you that that's his outlook. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith. When you come to chapter 3, verse 10, he makes another statement.

He says, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection. And Paul has a deepening longing to know Christ more personally, more intimately, more profoundly. As he endeavors to throw back the horizons of his mind and deepen the capacity of his soul to enjoy the Son of God.

He says that I might know him and the power of his resurrection. When you come to verse 13 of chapter 4, he has another amazing statement. Listen to this.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I can do all things through Christ who pours his strength into me. I have strength for all things through him who gives me power.

I can do all things through Christ who infuses his strength into me. And here you have Paul down here, the risen Lord in glory. And he's pouring his power and his strength into the life of Paul.

His life is but a channel through which the power of the risen Christ flows. So that he says, I can do all things. I can cope with every situation.

I can do the impossible. I can accomplish the unreasonable. I do it because of the strength that comes from the risen Christ.

You know, Peter experienced at once when the Lord was here. The magnetism and attraction of Christ enabled Peter to do what Christ could do. Maybe I've spoken about it to you before.

You'll remember, won't you, when the Lord went up to the mountain and left the disciples rowing below. The wind is contrary, the going's hard. They're rowing and it's hard going.

Suddenly across the waves there walks the Son of God. They're frightened. They think it's a ghost.

Be of good cheer, it is I. Be not afraid, comes the familiar tones of the Christ of God. And Peter in the boat looks over and he says, as into the darkness he peers, and he says, Lord, if it be thou bid me to come to thee upon the water. And across the dark waves, as the Son of God walked toward him, the voice of the Son of God cried, Come! And Peter begins to get over the boat.

Now listen, Peter, stay where you are, it's dark. But he's climbing over. Peter, stay where you are, it's difficult.

But Peter's over now and he's Peter on the other side. Peter, no further, it's dangerous. No saying what will happen.

But look, Peter's walking in the water. The waves have become a pavement for the feet of Peter. And as he looks at Christ, he begins to walk toward him.

And Peter's doing what Christ could do. Oh, the glory of it. It's impossible to nature.

It can't be done, says the worldly wise man. But Peter's walking in the water, superior to the wind, superior to the waves, superior to every circumstance, as the magnetism of Christ draws into him. And as long as he walked in the water and looked at Christ, he was well nigh infallible.

Listen, only one man in twelve did it. Is that right? Only one in twelve. Will you be that man? Will you be that woman? Will you lift your eyes to the Christ of God and recognize He'll hold you so that you'll live above your circumstances, far above the common herd? You'll walk in fellowship with the Son of God and the infinite undying strength of the Christ will pour through and into your life.

Oh, brethren and sisters, if we could gather on this last night of our meetings the wonder of the living Christ, the glory of the man who's yonder in heaven, I can do all things, no conditions, no qualifications. Yes, I can do all things through Christ who pours His strength into me. Have you got it? For to me to live is Christ.

The love of Christ, the strength of Christ, the mind of Christ, the will of Christ, the purpose of Christ. Here's a man that's Christ-centered, Christ-centric. Here is a man that is Christ-filled, Christ-directed, Christ-controlled.

Not self. Self has been dethroned. And from that day when the risen Lord appeared to him in a blaze of light on the Damascus turnpike and he engaged himself to the Son of God ever and anon, every day, week, month and year, he walked in holy fellowship with God's Son, knew the strength of Christ sustaining him until thirty years later.

Oh, it was no passing thing. Thirty years later, he said, for to me, to live, Christ. No one else, nothing else.

To have taken Christ out of Paul's life would have left him with nothing. How do you feel? I say, just a minute. You know, if I had a better job, I think I could make a better job of Christianity.

Or you might say, you know, if I lived in another town, or if I had a better home, or if I had this or that, you know, I could live for Christ grand. Well, now, this man was in prison when he said it. Now, right? He was chained to a Roman soldier.

The tide was running against him. He was incarcerated under house arrest, limited in his movements. And you can think of the passion of Paul, longing to be out, active, preaching, to carry on his itinerant evangelism.

And here he was, chained to a soldier. He lifts his pen to write, and the soldier will maybe need to write with him. For to me, to live, Christ.

Oh, it's wonderful, isn't it? If you can't live from where you are, you won't live from anywhere else. Now, he's in prison. Well, how will it work out? Well, now, I have before me, while I just read you the verse, you probably would know, that I'll be interpreting the text in the light of the context.

That I have before me verses 12 to 26. And if you drop your eye to verse 12, you'll find this, that the assembly at Philippi was concerned about Paul. They knew he was in Rome.

They were worried about him. Wonder what's happened to the wee man. For history tells us, you know, that he was quite a small man.

Very broad. Rouchy eyebrows, they tell us. A man with a small, sturdy, hardy, physical frame.

He must have had, to go through what he went through. A man at times whose eyes looked out at you like an angel. A man who devoted everything for Christ.

Now he's in Rome. The assembly that he formed at Philippi are concerned, so they decided to send Epaphroditus. They sent a gift to him.

And they're wondering how he's getting on. Look at verse 12. Brethren, he says, the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel.

Isn't that amazing? Not a word about himself. No self-pity. Not complaining a bit.

Elsewhere he'll write, I'm the prisoner of the Lord. Not Nero, Christ. You know, I'm always impressed with the selflessness of this man.

He has so disciplined his mind that he looks at every circumstance as how it will affect the gospel and how it will affect Christ and not him. Happy to rest in the will of God. Whether that will be prison or freedom.

That's good. You might hardly think that a man could do the will of God in prison. You might think if the big preacher's there, the best preacher that Christ ever had, and he's lying in jail, that the work's bound to suffer.

Well, you're wrong. We're usually wrong in our conclusions in these things. Inside the prison, the gospel's going along fine, and outside it's going great.

You would hardly believe that, would you? That if God laid a man aside, that things would go better. Tell me. Tell me.

You would be quite a leading man in the meeting, wouldn't you? You'd take quite a lot of part. Tell me. Remember the time the Lord laid you aside? You wondered how the meeting would go on without you.

And you know gradually, word began to come through that things were going along quite nicely. In fact, some of the brethren thought they were going a lot better without you. How does it feel? Have you got it? Oh dear, what's that? I don't want to lose my seven up.

That's the secret of a lot, you know. Now watch. Inside the prison, verse 13, my bonds in Christ are manifest in the praetorium and in all other places.

Later on he'll talk about saints in Caesar's household. So there was Paul, chained to a soldier. He had a captive audience every day.

They possibly changed the guard three or four times a day. And then he was chained to Paul. He had to watch as Paul wrote.

He had to listen to Paul as he talked to the friends that were allowed to come and visit him. He couldn't do anything else. It was his duty.

He would need to listen as Paul talked to him about Christ and he couldn't get sleep. And the guard changed and the same thing went on again. Until ultimately, all the guards are talking about Paul.

And then some of them got converted. And they went home and they told their friends and their family until ultimately they weren't only talking about Paul, they were talking about Christ. And they were getting

converted.

And Paul was reaching people he could never have reached if he hadn't been there. Isn't that wonderful? And when the devil put him in there, the devil thought, no, this will be a roadblock. This will hinder the gospel.

Put the big preacher to the side and things will stop. And instead of that, the roadblock became a stepping stone for salvation and conversion to folks that might never have heard it otherwise. Isn't it wonderful? You see, brethren, Paul put it like this in 2 Timothy 2. He says, The Word of God is not bound.

That's right. You can imprison the preacher. You cannot imprison the message that he preaches.

You can imprison the bearer of truth. You can never imprison the truth that he bears. Brethren, the message is always greater than the man.

Truth is greater than him who bears the glad tidings. Rome had no bars or walls or gates that could restrain and contain the Word of God. You see, if persecution could have obliterated Christianity, it would have died centuries ago.

But you cannot murder that which is eternal. You cannot annihilate that which liveth and abideth forever. You cannot by any means destroy that which belongs to God.

And the gospel went on and the gospel was preached. Ah now, what about outside? Oh well, there's two lots of preachers outside. Two lots.

Not one. Two lots. And mind you, they're all preaching the gospel.

Some are preaching out of love and concern for Paul. Others are preaching out of envy and strife. Now these men that are preaching out of envy and strife are not false teachers.

Please. They are not preaching another Jesus. They are not setting forth another gospel.

They are Christians with impure motives preaching Christ. So that outside, outside Paul's friends say now if Paul's in we'll need to get on with the job. He would want us to get on with the preaching.

So they redoubled their efforts, did Paul's friends and they began to preach. Ah but some of the people that didn't like Paul and preachers have other preachers that don't like them. And they looked and they said now this is great.

He's out the road. You know, we hadn't much of a chance when he was here. For Paul was gigantic.

He was big. And these people were just small beside him. And they were in the shade while Paul was there.

So when they put Paul in prison these boys got on the job. Impure motives. They wanted to make a name for themselves to get credit.

They wanted to stand out in front. Well good enough. They did it.

You see, the motives were pure but the preaching was alright. And you know there's a great thing about an audience. They only hear the preaching.

They can't see the motives. So everybody heard about Christ and says Paul. Here's how he looks at it.

He says this. What then? Notwithstanding whether pretense or in truth Christ is preached. I joy and rejoice with you all.

I like that. The man's big. He doesn't hold anything against these preachers.

They can scandalize him if they wish. They can murder him and crucify him if they want to. He doesn't care a bit.

All he cares about is this. That Christ is being preached and that's all that matters. That's great, isn't it? Come again please, will you? Verse 19 now.

We'll move away from the progress of the gospel to the confidence of Paul. He's going now to talk about some big things. Now he says I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

That's good. Paul has a deepening conviction that he'll be released. And he says I think that this will turn out because of your prayers and the further supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Now he's in a difficult situation. It's not easy. But he says you pray for me, will you? And he says I believe that the Spirit of God will give me courage and wisdom and the words to speak when I stand on trial.

And ultimately he says I hope to be released. This shall turn out to my deliverance. Look now at verse 20.

One consuming desire. Now watch how he puts it. Do you find this interesting? As always so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body whether it be by life or by death.

All he has a desire now is Christ to be magnified in this. Wouldn't matter what happened to him as long as Christ is made great. Now of course you can't make Christ personally greater than he is but you can make him great to folks that don't think very much about him.

Magnified in my body. I suppose you know that there are two ways for magnification. For instance if you use a microscope it will make small things big.

But if you use a telescope it will make distant things near. They'll each magnify in their own way. Have you got that? So that if you take the microscope it makes little things big.

Not that Christ is little or small but you can make him big to people who think he is. Have you got that? You can magnify him. You can give people great thoughts of Christ your Saviour.

Ah but note if you take the telescope it will magnify but it will make distant things near different things altogether. And that's our business isn't it? To make the man that's distant to men bring him near to them. Live shoulder to shoulder with them.

Let them see Christ in you. In your words in your actions in all their good. Christ might be magnified in my body whether by life or by death.

Now that's different isn't it? I've often wondered brethren and sisters why it is that over in the West and I include Britain in this for the Gospel and the mercy of God moved westward not eastward. I've often wondered why it is that God doesn't count as worthy to suffer more. You know sometimes I get a little

envious.

I really do. You know I'd have loved to have stood with this wee man many a time on Mars Hill and all these places. I really would.

Love to have stood by him in days of difficulty and days of danger. You know I think of these big men of the past. I think of Martin Luther Man he took on a big job didn't he? When he decided to take on the might of Rome.

When the going up the steps suddenly there came to him the scripture as he did his penance the just shall live by faith. And the scripture they had read hundreds of times suddenly became a flash of brilliant light to his soul. The just shall live by faith not by words.

Do you remember the day that he nailed his thesis to the door and proclaimed the truth of justification by faith and lit a light in Europe that has never gone out. You know they came to Luther one day they said to him listen Luther you haven't a chance the whole world is against you. I like Luther.

Do you know what he said? He squared his shoulders. He says well I'm against the whole world. I tell you when he made these statements and nailed his thesis to the door I would have loved to have stood beside him.

I could have done very much. I would have said Martin I'm here. I would have stood beside him.

But everybody sees I was on his side. That's it isn't it? Ah but there were men and women like Paul. And Christ was magnified in their dying.

The hills of Scotland are stained with the blood of martyrs. Young men and women who died for Christ sealed their testimony with their blood. Great things.

Scotland are stained with the blood of martyrs. Young men and women who died for Christ sealed their testimony with their blood. Great things.

Whether by life or by death. Verse 21 For now we're back at the text again. For to me to live Christ would that be right? What do you think? What does your family think? For to me to live sport for to me to live music for to me to live go on put it in What's the thing you love? What's the thing the worldly Christians go in for? What's the thing that occupies their time? For to me to live Christ would that be right? Let me illustrate it from John 15.

Do you remember the Lord Jesus said this? Every branch in me that beareth fruit that's positive He purges it that it might bring forth more fruit that's comparative fruit more fruit Then he says He that abideth in me and I in him the same produces much fruit that's superlative fruit is positive more fruit is comparative much fruit is superlative Now every branch in me that beareth fruit means this that every person that converted produces fruit Alright, what's fruit? What's fruit?

Well now fruit is the expression of the life of the tree Who's the tree? Christ I am the vine Every branch in me that beareth fruit means this that every Christian is expected to reproduce the life of Christ Now this is transforming It is revolutionizing You're not here to produce your own personality You're here to produce Christ to reproduce the Son of God Isn't that amazing? Every branch in me that beareth fruit He purges it that it might bring forth more fruit Now would I be right?

Now don't be afraid to tell me if you think I'm wrong or not Would I be right that more fruit is comparative with fruit? That Well now let me put it like this Four years since I was in Vancouver The time before that 73-8 years Tell me Would you think that you would see more of Christ in me tonight than then? Can I see more of Christ in you than then? Have you got it? Much fruit is superlative And if I'm right If I'm right in my reasoning and exposition here that would mean this That the oldest of the Christians should be most Christ-like Is that right?

For to me to live Christ Then he comes up with one of those statements he always comes up and you know Paul there's a lot of people here thinking that you've just spoiled this To die gay Would you honestly believe that? You know I get concerned You see The gospel preachers tell sinners that they won't face up to the fact of dying Is that right? That's what you tell them Do you know I find the Christians are like that Oh yes Way down yonder in South Wales very good friend of ours There came a day when her husband died long lingering illness ultimately died I was out of the country and couldn't be there However as soon as I get home I went down and was having some meetings and I was staying with a friend Suddenly dawned on me in the second night that she wasn't singing So I said to her son on the way out I said I notice mother's not singing That's right he said she's lost her song So the following night when we get in for supper that's after the meeting in our country While we were having supper I raised the matter with her I said you know I'm concerned I said I notice you've lost your song She dropped her eyes I said do you remember telling me the first night I was here about a widow up the road who's unconverted and you were telling me how wonderful she was getting on and she's got no Christ She's no Christians to pray for her She's no Bible to feed her soul No power of the spirit Do you remember Sunday afternoon Brethren and sisters it's when the test comes that reveals where we are To die says this man is gain Now he's got a big problem If you drop your eye he's talking in verse 22 about living in the body In verse 24 he's talking about abiding in the body But in verse 23 he's got a problem He's a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better Big problem for Paul He recognized that the saints needed him but he wanted to go to Christ Ah well now Paul You won't mind us telling you that we would have no difficulty in solving the problem Isn't that right?

We would just say to the Lord Lord there needn't be any problem about this at all just you leave me here Isn't that right? But I want you to note something I want you to notice you're now dealing with a man that loved heaven better than earth I want you to notice a man that's going to accept the will of God against his own desires He wants to go and Christ wants him to stay And he says I'm hemmed in like a man walking along a narrow ledge hedged between two rocks He's hemmed in completely I am in a fix between two things He says I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you Now let's have a go at this shall we?

A desire to depart Long to be with Christ in heaven You know that word depart It's the idea of loosening an oxen from the shafts The day of labour is over the time of rest has come It's the idea of taking the chains off a prisoner You lay aside the shackles in order to be free It's like pulling up the tent pegs You're going to leave earth and take the road that leads to God It's like loosening the moorings of a ship so that you can sail out into the harbour of heaven That's it Paul's longing for the day when he'll enter into rest blessed are the dead that die in the Lord for they do rest from their labours and their works to follow them He's longing for the time when he can take up residence in heavenly places when he can sail into the harbour in full sail Paul's longing to be with Christ Let me talk to you about it Tell me Did you ever think of stepping onto a shore and finding it to be heaven?

Ever thinking of looking into a face and finding it to be the face of Christ? Ever think of grasping a hand and finding it to be the hand of Christ? Ever think of breathing in air and finding it to be celestial? Ever find Ever think of feeling the throbbings of life and finding it to be the life that is eternal? And the end has come Every problem solved All rights made wrong Every answer to every question As you enter over into heaven Listen will you There's no disappointment in heaven No weariness sorrow or pain No hearts that are bleeding and broken No song with a minor refrain The clouds of our earthly horizon will never appear in the sky For all will be sunshine and gladness With never a sob nor a sigh We'll never pay rent for our mansion The taxes will never come due Our garments will never grow threadbare But always be fadeless and new We'll never be hungry nor thirsty Nor languish in poverty there For all the rich bounties of heaven God's sanctified children shall share There will be never crepe on the doorknob No funeral train in the sky No graves on the hillside of glory For there we shall nevermore die The old will be young there forever Transformed in a moment of time Immortal will stand in his likeness the stars and the sun to outshine I'm bound for that beautiful city My Lord has prepared for his own Where all the redeemed of all ages sing glory around the white throne Sometimes I grow homesick for heaven And the glories I there shall behold What a joy that will be when my Saviour I see in that beautiful city of gold Where and what will it be to be there To gaze upon Christ for the first time To take in the glory of the Son of God so majestic and wonderful To gaze upon a person and to see a beauty you've never beheld before For the beauty of earth and the beauty of men and women will be outshone by the beauty of Christ And the greatness and glory of Christ shall capture your heart forever Oh brethren What will it be just to see Christ He says I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you Why that's good isn't it Eh?

You see The Lord could have taken any one of us home this last week or two and he didn't From that I would gather this It's more needful for you that I remain It's more needful for me that you remain That there's still work to be done or he would have taken us home to the glory Having this confidence I know that I shall abide and remain with you all To abide is to stay alongside That word remain means not only to be with a person but to come alongside to help them That's it It's not enough we're alongside of people We must be alongside of them to help them That's the great thing in life isn't it That your ministry whatever it may be will be to help people Paul says I have no fear I'm going to remain Now let me come back and I'll close For to me to live Christ For to me to live Christ Ever Christ Always Christ Only Christ No one else but Christ Jack Hunter will need to disappear in your own name Says the Baptist as he caught the glory of the idea He must increase but I must decrease He must go on expanding in his fullness I must go on contracting That's right That's right So that impressions might be left upon your soul of Christ and not the preacher Have you got it?

For to me to live Will there be results from meetings like this Will there be something wrought in your soul that will make you different forever For to me to live is Christ And in the end that's the only thing that will be rewarded In the end that is the thing that will count at the judgment seat the transforming power of Christ I've talked to you this last meeting or two about God working inwardly Right in He's changing you inside Because Christianity works from the inside Have you got that?

And if God can't change you inside by the power of his spirit you'll never be changed outside That's why we've got hypocrites amongst us Because they are not allowing God to work inside And I would say to each of you tonight If there's a shadow that's falling across your path If there's something that you know you should do and you haven't done it If there's anything to be put right Whatever it may be remember this It's damaging you It's hindering you blessing other people It may be that I wouldn't know It may be your

family is not too spiritual And that could be your husband or wife as well as the children growing up It may be your friends are not too spiritual It may be your relatives are not And all these things are calculated to keep you going on a road you shouldn't be on And I want you to take this tonight personally And I want you to take it right home with you For to me to live Christ Maybe tonight you'll have the courage to say things are going to be different now Things are going to change now For to me to live is Christ And if we die it's only an entrance to the presence of Christ So that it's Christ when you live and it's Christ when you die You know the Bible says when a Christian dies that they go home to be with the Lord You leave one home for another home Isn't that wonderful? So may the Lord bless his work Let us pray

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