

# To Me to Live Is Christ

by Ian Murray

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of prioritizing our relationship with Christ above all else, and finding true happiness and contentment in Him.*

**Duration:** 50:00

**Scripture:** Philippians 1:9-24

**Topics:** "Contentment In Christ", "Christian Happiness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the fleeting nature of worldly possessions and the futility of seeking happiness in them. He shares the story of Maria Callas, a wealthy opera singer who died feeling empty and having nothing. The preacher highlights the privilege of being a Christian and attributes Paul's contentment in difficult circumstances to his knowledge of Christ. Despite being imprisoned and facing opposition from both the world and fellow believers, Paul found joy in his relationship with Christ. The sermon encourages believers to find their happiness in Christ alone and to be content with what they have.

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## Transcript

A moment or two, for someone coming from Britain, Australia is an amazingly new country. You remember it was not settled until the year 1788, so it's not even 200 years old as a country. And its settlement has had an influence on its character ever since.

I believe that it was settled by some of the worst and by some of the best people who ever lived and it's that mixture that's continued. The first settlement was in New South Wales in the southeast corner of Australia in 1788 as a penal colony we shipped, transported, you recall, men and women from Britain to Australia. And with the first fleet that went out went a friend of John Newton's, a man called Richard Johnson, who was a faithful evangelical chaplain.

But you can imagine what difficult work it was to be a pastor among people who had not called you, who did not want you. He was the pastor of the whole convict settlement. And the first few years were years of great spiritual struggle.

And then at the end of the 18th century, in the providence of God, some 30 missionaries, almost 30, went to Tahiti. And that came to nothing at the time. But about 7 or 8 of the men who went to Tahiti came back to Australia and they began to preach and to establish free churches that were not connected with the

Church of England.

And then a little later on, 10, 20 years later, Presbyterians started to arrive. And many of those people came from the highland clearances in Scotland. There had been great revivals in the highlands.

Many people were converted. And then there was a time, it wasn't of spiritual persecution, but it amounted to that. People were literally burned off their land, their homes were taken from them, and transported.

And many of these people were indeed the salt of the earth. And that was the admixture, as though God was sending Christians into a very needy land. And then during the last century also, of course, Baptist influence grew.

As many of you know, Thomas Spurgeon was in Australia and also New Zealand. The Bible from New Park Street that Spurgeon preached from was taken out to Australasia. And his principles and the doctrines of grace were taken out too.

And then as in the rest of the English speaking world, sadly, there was this terrible decline. Liberalism came in, strong churches were weakened, preaching fell into bad days. And early in this century, as you may know if you've looked at the life of A.W. Pink, things were at a pretty low ebb.

Although all traditions still existed. For example, when Pink was in Sydney in the 1920s, there were large midweek congregations that he preached to. And now that is almost all gone.

The traditions have gone. And had it not been for a true resurgence of the doctrines of grace in the last 20 years, things would be unimaginably bad, I think. But one can say with thankfulness to God, there has been a real resurgence.

It's come through many different channels. One family of Reformed Baptists in Sydney had a vision to use the basement of their house to store books and to lend books. And then they started a little shop in the basement of their house.

And that has now grown to the largest Christian bookstore in Australia with thousands of books going out. And it's to me quite amazing that so many books can be sold. Sydney, of course, is a city of some three million people, including half a million Muslims.

Australia is a vast country in which the population is grouped largely in about five cities. So the doctrines of grace have spread. And there are many young ministers in different denominations who have been raised up.

By saying many, I suppose they are, as elsewhere, only a remnant compared to the numbers who aren't so persuaded. But yet they are a considerable number. And they would be men who would have rejoiced to have been with us this week, whose heart beats with the things that we have rejoiced in together.

I shall never forget that when Mr. Martin and I were in Australia in 1979 and were just leaving, a man in all seriousness said to us, a pastor, he said, you know, if the things that you have been teaching are not true, you will have a lot to answer for. By which he meant that these things cause such disturbance and pain and difficulty in churches that if they weren't true, and he said it was great feeling and weight. I believe he knew they were true.

But as you, brethren, well know, the word of God experimentally preached and applied is a disturbing force. And a struggle is going on in Australia as elsewhere. And it's not a struggle that can be identified by denominational labels.

It's going on in different denominations, different groups. It's the problem of men being truly faithful to the word of God and remaining in their pastorates, being faithful to people's souls. So do seek to pray for the churches in Australia.

I know a number of brethren there have been praying for us here this week. And as I mentioned last night, there are these meetings beginning on August the 9th for nearly two weeks. And if you were able to remember these meetings in your prayer, then please do so.

So I mention these things just to encourage you partly and to fill you in. It is, and I know it seems a very remote part of the world. It isn't really.

I used to think that myself. It isn't nearly so remote. And the influences in Australia are just the same as in other parts of the world.

Now let us read the word of God in the epistle of Paul to the Philippians. Philippians chapter 1. Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ. To all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine for you all.

Making request with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Being confident of this very thing. That he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all. Because I have you in my heart. In as much as both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record. How greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

And this I pray. That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. That ye may approve things that are excellent.

That ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness. Which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

But I would ye should understand brethren. That the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

And many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds. Are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife.

And some also of good will. The one preach Christ of contention. Not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my bonds.

But the other of love. Knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? Notwithstanding every way.

Whether in pretense or in truth. Christ is preached. And I therein do rejoice.

Yea and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation. Through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ.

According to my earnest expectation and my hope. That in nothing I shall be ashamed. But that with all boldness as always.

So now also Christ shall be magnified in my body. Whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

But if I live in the flesh this is the fruit of my labor. Yet what I shall choose I want not. For I am in a strait betwixt two.

Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. It seemed to me brethren that at this closing session this morning.

We could think again for a little of the words of testimony. Which the apostle gives us in the 21st verse of this chapter. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Here are words which are not so much words of instruction. But words to speak I trust to our hearts. The apostles summary and testimony of his whole purpose and life as a Christian.

Now you will remember that he spoke and wrote these words. At a time when there were many difficulties. And not a few reasons for possible discouragement.

He had been a prisoner for more than two years. Taken under Felix and kept under Festus in Judea. Transported to Rome.

Speaks of his bonds. Doesn't speak lightly of his bonds. It was given to Paul to suffer for Christ's sake.

As he tells us it is to all Christians. He was thus in a condition and circumstance of restraint. And had been for some while.

There was also the possible discouragement arising from the ill will of professed believers in the very church in Rome. Those who preached Christ out of motives that were unworthy of the gospel. Who sought to lessen Paul's influence.

Who preached with a spirit of envy towards Paul. Even though they preached obviously the orthodox and the true faith of Christ. And then there was the illness of Epaphroditus who was sick.

Paul says near unto death. And God spared him. Lest he says I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

So Paul is not writing these words or giving this testimony in a time of comparative ease or freedom from difficulty. He is in the very midst of difficulty. And yet as you well know this is an epistle of joy.

And these words are words of joy in verse 21. And the reason for Paul's rejoicing is his consciousness of the wonder of God's providence. Here he was in Rome.

Not indeed as he had once expected to come to Rome. For he had long looked forward to the opportunity. But there in God's providence he was in Rome.

Not it is true free to preach. And yet in the very palace in the providence of God he was put in a position where his very confinement and bonds added to his preaching. The providence of God and this is the supreme reason for his joy.

The providence of God was working together for the advancement of what was dearest of all to the apostle Paul. And that was the advancement of the gospel. The exaltation and the honor of Christ.

And that is how he leads into the words before our text. His joy was that despite all things Christ's name was being proclaimed. The gospel was advancing.

Jesus was being exalted. And so Paul speaks in these preceding verses of Christ being magnified. And of he being willing to live or die provided that should be so.

And one can suppose that someone would have perhaps unthinkingly said to the apostle, Well you speak of Christ being honored and of Christ being praised but what about your own welfare? And what about your own happiness? And what about your own future? And Paul as though in answer to that question says, For, that is explaining what he has previously said, For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. Again, the question so put is an entirely wrong question because Paul has no life or ambitions apart from Christ. For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Now brethren, I think I believe indeed that these words give us a testimony of Paul as a Christian. I do not believe that Paul is here speaking as an apostle. He is not speaking in any capacity as an office bearer in the church of Christ, although he is that.

But he is speaking as a Christian. And ultimately and in the deepest sense that is what we have always to put first. The unspeakable privilege of being Christians.

It's a great snare in the ministry as I'm sure we've all found. That the very work of the ministry, the very work of preaching, the very work of conducting public worship can almost at times become a substitute for our own personal devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, our work as ministers may come before our position as Christians.

The disciples knew something of that temptation when they came back to our Lord and told Him how even the devils were subject to them through Christ's name. They were so taken up with the work which God had enabled them to do and it was noble work and it was God's work, but they were taken up with it in a way in which our Lord disapproved. In this rejoice not, He says, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rejoice rather that your names are written in heaven.

That you are indeed my people and God's children. And I do believe that that is the very first thing. And as we look at this text from the point of view of testimony, it is the words of a man who reminds us that being ministers we are first of all nevertheless Christians.

And that being so, these words tell us that a Christian is someone who has a supreme regard for the Lord Jesus Christ. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If those words are words of Christian testimony as I believe they are, then they are telling us that a person who is a Christian is someone who chooses and prefers Christ before everyone else and everything else.

He lives for Christ. He has, I say, supreme regard for Christ. And love to Christ and devotion to Christ are fundamental characteristics of the true Christian.

Well, that is a truth I trust we preach regularly and yet how daily we need to remind ourselves of it. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha. Devotion to Christ is indispensably the mark of a Christian.

The Apostle John says, these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Luke tells us the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. And there it was at Antioch, you recall, that Barnabas exhorted the disciples to cleave unto the Lord.

Devotion to Christ and that devotion was so marked in them by God's grace that they were called Christians first at Antioch. And isn't that simply what our Lord is intending when He says, if any man come after me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. If we are Christians, then Christ has to be the first and central object in our lives and in our hearts.

I think if we discuss the matter, we would all agree that our greatest problem in the ministry is the inability of people to understand the greatness of the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. Isn't that true? It may be some people imagine that a Christian is just someone who lives in a certain type of way, has a certain type of behavior. Other people think a Christian is someone who attends church and who has been baptized.

Others think a Christian is a person who has orthodox opinions. And all kinds of beliefs exist in our churches and is it not true that our fundamental problem, and a problem that is beyond all human solving but is the work of God's Spirit Himself, is to show the stupendous difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. A Christian is a person who is a new creature and he is new insofar as his whole life is now centered upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we preach that, we seek to preach it feebly. And we must live it. And that is Paul's testimony here before us this morning.

Now looking at his testimony and with particular regard to our position as ministers, let us note a few further truths that I believe lie in the verse. When Paul says, for to me to live is Christ, that certainly includes the truth that Christ was the source of the Apostle Paul's happiness and rest and contentment. You know the answer to the first question of the Shorter Catechism, that we are to glorify God and to enjoy Him.

Christ is the believer's happiness. Now I say that is in our text surely by the whole way in which Paul's testimony is given to us. Here he is in imprisonment, in bonds, in affliction, knowing hostility not only from the world but from professing Christians, being in circumstances that none of us would choose to be in and which Paul had not chosen to be in, and being in such circumstances not for the first time but having been in that condition many times, beaten with stripes, shipwrecked, persecuted, suffering the loss of all things.

And yet Paul in these circumstances is able to tell us that he could rejoice. And he could rejoice because the cause of his true happiness was unchanging. For to me to live is Christ.

That is to say, so long as I have Christ, I have enough. Isn't that what Hebrews 13 says when we read, Be content with such things as ye have, no matter what they are, for he hath fed. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.

The only possible ground for Christian joy and contentment in this fallen, unbelieving world, the only possible sure ground of contentment is the Lord Jesus Christ himself. When Paul says, for to me to live is Christ, he is telling us that he has a source of happiness which is unchanging and unaffected by everything that this world can do. What a wonderful truth that is, isn't it? As we see the world around us and people attending our churches and as we read our newspapers, the one thing that continually surely is before us is the fact that there is no happiness in this world of any sure nature because men and women set their hopes upon that which is passing away.

The very things upon which people pin their hopes of lasting contentment and happiness are perishing in their hands. People trust in their abilities, in their employment, in their loved ones, in their possessions. Whatever these things are, they are frail and passing and are like the wind that goes and comes not again.

We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we shall carry nothing out. And how pathetically true it is that we live in a world where everyone is seeking to find rest and happiness in sources where it cannot be found. Old Samuel Rutherford used to say, build your nest in no tree here for God has condemned this whole forest to destruction.

I was glancing the other week at the biography of the opera singer Maria Callas. What a distressing book. Made me think that we should look into such books a little more often than perhaps we do.

A modern person, affluent, fortune, dying in her early 50s, saying at the age of 53, I have nothing. That is the modern world. Onassis, with whom she was closely related for nine years, the great millionaire, climbing, as he says, to the top of the tree.

And his biographer says that when he got there, he found there was nothing. That is the world. There is no sure happiness here.

It is all slipping through men's fingers. And so when Paul says, for to me to live is Christ, he is telling us that here is a sure source for us, brethren, and for all God's people, of rest and joy in this present world. Well, the application is clear enough for us.

What is our real happiness based upon? And in the ministry, what is the real source of our happiness? And let us beware of the temptation of thinking that it is our work or what we are doing. It has to be more than that. It has to be Christ himself.

I love the words of the Italian Marquis who was converted at the time of the Reformation, Caracchiolos is his Latin name, who had to give up his estates in Italy and flee to Geneva. And his loss was so considerable to the Church of Rome that he was offered a free passage back and restoration to his estates on certain conditions. And this noble Christian who was sitting under the word of God in Geneva sent the message back, let their money perish with them who esteem all the gold in this world worthy to be compared with one day's society with Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit.

That's what Paul is saying here. Today in the city of Singapore, which is a great strategic center in Southeast Asia, as you know, there are two ministers working by the name of To. And their spiritual history traces back through their family to William Chalmers Burns 100 years ago who went out to China.

They like to think of that and others of us do too because if you've read the life of Burns you will know that there was comparatively little fruit from his labors in China. And when Burns died, having never returned to Scotland, when he died all his possessions were sent home and they all came in a little box. And the box was opened in his old family home and a child who was there observed this happening and saw what was taken out of the box.

A Bible, a flag, one or two shirts, a few oddments, and that was about all. And the child said, he must have been very poor. Well, perhaps he was.

But Burns in China was a man possessed with true and all sufficient happiness. You've read the life of John G. Payton, I trust, who went out to the New Hebrides in the late 1850s and on the island of Tanna was beset by great difficulties. Cannibal people who had never heard the gospel.

Then his wife died after childbirth. Their little baby boy then died. He was left alone.

His house finally was burned down. He lost everything. Spent a night hiding in a tree.

Tells us that in the middle of the night as he hung in that tree, the words were as clear to him as though they were written in gold right across the sky. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Now, that is the source of the Christian's happiness.

That is certainly included in what Paul means when he says, for to me to live is Christ. So long as I have Christ, I have enough. Let me just give you one other illustration of the same truth, which I read quite recently.

During the Second World War, there was a Church of Scotland minister who was still in France when the occupation occurred, Donald Caskey. Some of you may have read his autobiography. He became really a witness among the resistance forces and worked as a chaplain among the resistance forces.

And then finally he was captured by the Gestapo. Imprisoned in the south of France, in one of the buildings that was specially used to imprison and torture and interrogate prisoners of the Gestapo. And he tells us how in his early days in that place, he was in a room, of course, on his own, on a deep basement of the house where there was a long corridor and there were others he knew in the corridor, but he knew not who they were.

But he heard one day another prisoner obviously being taken, arrived, taken for interrogation. He knew what that meant. Dragged back along the corridor in silence, thrown into his cell room, door slammed in silence.

And then suddenly the voice of singing, and it is this man, and he is singing the words of Paul Gerhardt, Paul Gerhardt, O sacred head so wounded, what language shall I offer to thank thee, dearest friend, for this thy dying sorrow, thy pity without end. Those wonderful words that we often sing. Doesn't matter where a Christian is, whatever circumstances, in Christ he has enough.

For to me to live is Christ. Now there is something else too, of course. There is much more.

But these verses also remind us that the Christian is one who lives in the light of two worlds. And therefore that must be true of us also as ministers. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Paul doesn't simply tell us what his view was of this present time, but he speaks of life and death, of time and eternity, this world and the world to come. And surely that is Christian experience. The Christian is someone who once lived for this world alone.

Once upon a time, brethren, we could all say, for us to live is this. And perhaps, who knows, it was sport, or our ambitions, or our work, or our family, or whatever it was, but whatever it was, it was confined to the limits of time and this world. A non-Christian can never say, and does never say, for to me to die is gain.

But a Christian is one who looks at everything not only in terms of this world, but in terms of the world to come. He has heard the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in that awesome parable, when the rich fool is addressed by God, who says, Thou fool, Thou fool, to live for this present time, to suppose that because our bonds are full and all is well, that we can be content. Well, brethren, we have been delivered from that if we are Christians.

But that motivation needs to remain at the forefront of our minds. We must always be saying to ourselves and to one another, Yes, we do live, and we live. May God help us for Christ.

But also, we are to die, and we don't put that thought from us. We don't regard it as a calamity, but rather we say, to die is gain. We are looking for His appearing.

It would be, it ought to be our preference to serve Christ without sin, to serve Him perfectly, to stand before His face. And that is our hope, is it not? And therefore, an ever-present motive for the minister of the gospel is the reality that he is living in the light of two worlds. And indeed, Paul tells us that that motivation was so necessary for him that he says, If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are all men the most miserable.

In other words, so much is Paul dependent upon the truth and the reality of that which is to come, that without that future reality, he tells us, the present moment would be unbearable. And if we don't feel that way, it must be because we are too content in this world. And we don't faith enough of the tribulations that belong to those who are faithful to Christ.

According to the New Testament, the Christian needs the motive of knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. We need that motive. And it was that motive, of course, so deeply that filled the hearts of men like William Carey and William Chalmers Burns and others who took the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

And I do believe, I'm sure you do also, brethren, that we need a recovery of that motive in our day. We've been speaking and hearing of the fear of God and what it means to please Him and be faithful. And it certainly will mean tribulation.

It may even mean, as it was for Paul, as he says in chapter 3, he suffered the loss of all things. But all things in this world are but as nothing compared to the wonder of the truth of what God has prepared for them that love Him. The labor, the pains, the cost, the persecution of this moment, says the Apostle, is not worthy of being compared to live, yes, and to die also.

And the Christian is looking at both. When Dr. Lloyd-Jones was near to his death, I received, I suppose, it might have been the last rebuke that I had from him. You know, faithful men rebuke others and I had many faithful rebukes from him.

And the last one that I recall was this. I was speaking to him about a Christian who had been a mister fearing, lacked assurance, went through his life in carefulness of spirit. He seemed to have no great persuasion of the reality of heaven.

But when this dear man came to die, he was really in heaven some weeks before he got there. He had one foot in this world and one in glory. And we had never seen anything so wonderful as the reality in that dying man's bedroom of the presence of Christ and so on.

Well, I was speaking about this to Dr. Lloyd-Jones and I said to him, if only he could have lived as he died. Oh, he gave me a withering rebuke to that. He said, don't underestimate what it means to die.

He thought to die like that was indeed a wonderful thing. It was all very well for me to be talking about how people should live. But he was saying, let us also prepare for death and if we can face death as that dear Christian did, what a glorious testimony it is to the gospel.

Well, I shall remember that. I hope. And we need to remember it.

And we need to live it. To die is gain. One other truth here.

I believe that when Paul says, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain, he is saying that the Christian life is something that is inexplicable and mysterious and cannot be understood by the world because the world doesn't know Christ. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, says the apostle John, that we should be called the sons of God, therefore the world knoweth us not because it knew him not. You can't explain a Christian to a non-Christian because to know what a Christian is you first have to know Christ.

Now that should be true and is true in the ministry also. Some of you have read the life of William Grimshaw in the 18th century. Ryle writes about him.

If you have, you'll remember that when in the ministry he was converted, he was suddenly called Mad Grimshaw. People previously understood the man. He was a polite clergyman, fairly orthodox, nothing very startling about him, but then the man was converted and people began to say he's gone mad, Mad Grimshaw.

And when Grimshaw died, this was the text that he asked to be put upon his grave for to me to live is Christ. If you ever get to Haworth in Yorkshire, go and see the grave of William Grimshaw where Whitfield used to preach. For me to live is Christ.

The world can't understand that. That's why when people are converted in our congregations, their parents or their sisters and so on, they say they've gone crazy. You have to know Christ to understand a Christian.

So then, these truths, brethren, indicate to us that to be a Christian is a most glorious, wonderful privilege. As I close, let me just say one or two words on how Paul came to talk like this. Isn't it the longing of our hearts that we should also say what Paul says here? How did Paul come to talk like this? I believe there are two main reasons and I give them to you as briefly as I can.

The first is that it is simply the consequence of knowing Christ. Everyone who knows Christ regards Him as precious. Unto you, therefore, which believe He is precious.

The New Testament teaches us it is impossible to know Christ, that He is the Lord of glory, the Creator of all things, the One who was made sin for us, the One at whose name every knee shall bow, the One who is coming to judge. It is impossible to know Him and live for oneself. That's what the Gospel teaches, isn't it? He died for all that they which live should live henceforth no longer unto themselves.

And when Paul came to know Christ from that moment, he began to live for Him. That's true of every Christian. And that means that to be more devoted to Christ, we need to know Him more.

That, again, leads us straight to the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul believed that he would be saved through your prayers, the prayers of the Christians to whom he was writing, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is that which leads us into a closer knowledge of Christ.

So Paul says in chapter 3, that I might know Him. Paul, as it were, feeling that he stands on only the edge and the beginning of the ocean to know Christ. And the more we know Christ, the more devoted we shall be to Him.

We all, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. That is the Spirit's work, to lead us into a clearer knowledge of Christ. And that clearer knowledge of Christ is knowledge which leads us more and more to seek to live only for Him.

You understand, of course, brethren, that when I say this is the language of every Christian, I do not mean that every Christian speaks these words with the same degree of intensity and conviction. It is the mark of aged saints that as they ripen for glory, they say the words of Philippians 1.21 with greater sincerity, with greater passion. And that should be our longing, that if God spares us a year henceforth, these words will be more real to us, that our experience of Christ will deepen.

That surely God will do for us by His Holy Spirit. But another second truth, it is not simply knowing Christ more, but in a sense it is even more wonderful than that, that the life that we live as Christians is after all life in union with Christ. How much Paul says about that in this epistle.

The saints in Philippi are in Christ Jesus. Christ is going to be magnified, says Paul, and where? Well, in verse 21, in my body, in my body. Christ who is our life.

I live yet, not I, but Christ liveth in me. If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, how much more being reconciled we shall be saved in His life. There again is the work of the Spirit.

By the indwelling of the Spirit, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is present in our hearts. It is not that we are living one life and seeking to devote it to Christ. It is more than that.

It is the truth that the very life which we have is life in union with Christ Himself. In fellowship with Him. Belonging to Him.

United to Him. That is why to die is gain. Union with Christ is union forever.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall life or death or principalities or powers or things present or things to come. Nothing can sever the believer from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And that is where we are as Christians.

In Christ. Just 300 years ago this summer in Scotland were the months that were known as the killing times when many Christian men and women were put to death for their faith. And included among them those two women of whom I am sure many of you have read Margaret MacLachlan and Margaret Wilson.

Margaret MacLachlan drowned first on a stake out in the tide as it came in. Margaret Wilson who was not quite 18 was to be drowned second on a stake much nearer the shore. And as the first woman was drowning with the waters coming over her head the persecutors of the younger woman said to her And what do you think now of her? And the reply to that was in those beautiful words this young Christian said I see Christ there.

She said Think you that we suffer? No. She said. It is Christ in us.

Now that is the heart of Paul's thinking. For to me to live is Christ. He is in Christ.

His life is Christ. His very bonds are in Christ. Everything about Paul is in union with Jesus Christ himself.

Well brethren it is time for us to stop. Let us never forget I am sure we have been reminded of it that to do good in the work of the ministry we must be more devoted to Jesus Christ. Everything we read in the scriptures everything we read in Christian biography reminds us of that truth.

To be near to Christ is the source of only the only source of effective usefulness in this world. And it matters not what gifts we have or what churches we have or anything else but if we are not near to Him our words will do little good in this world. If you have not yet got Samuel Rutherford's letters that nice thick book that is now out I encourage you to get it.

I have a Baptist friend in Sydney who has just been reveling in it for months now. Same truth. Rutherford put in prison that will silence him.

That will be an end of him. The very opposite. Rutherford in prison says he is like a man drunk with wine.

Presence of Christ is there. He writes letters which are scattered all over Scotland and being read today. And what are these letters but letters which speak of the wonder of being Christians.

That Christ is our Saviour and presently with us. Well brethren may God help us to heed these truths and to take them to ourselves. Without me ye can do nothing but His gracious promise Lo I am with you always.

Shall we pray? O Lord our gracious God and Father we do seek together to thank Thee for Thy love and kindness and grace to us. We thank Thee for this opportunity again this week to meet in Christian fellowship. We thank Thee for the blessing of knowing the unity of Thy people.

And Lord we pray that Thou wouldst ever increase it in our hearts, in our churches, amongst the preachers of Thy word in this and other countries. We pray Thee to deliver us from all disunity from all that would grieve Thy spirit. We pray that we might look more steadfastly to Christ and to Him alone.

We thank Thee for those who have been with us and we pray Lord that as we separate and some to travel long distances we ask for Thy care and guiding hand upon us all. Bless our homes and families. Be with those who could not be present this week and we remember especially our friend Ernie Riesinger we ask Lord for Thy special blessing and strength and grace to be given to him.

We pray too for our families and loved ones. We ask that Thou wouldst be near to them and uphold them.  
Lord receive our thanks and our praise.

Send us on our way rejoicing. Pardon all our sins. As we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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