

For Me to Live Is Christ

by J. Sidlow Baxter

The secret to a truly great life is to live for Christ and give oneself to Him in utter totality.

Duration: 31:02

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:27, Romans 8:6, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 1:21, Philippians 4:7, Colossians 3:17

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, Dr. Dave Sidlow-Baxter focuses on the powerful words of the Apostle Paul in Philippians 1:21, 'For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' He emphasizes that this statement holds the secret to a truly great life and the inmost mystery of the Christian experience. Dr. Baxter highlights the significance of Paul's ability to write and how it has impacted countless lives. He also discusses the contrasting perspectives on death, highlighting that while it is a loss for the natural man, it is gain for the Christian. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the centrality of Christ in a believer's life and the eternal hope found in Him.

Transcript

With gratitude to God for his coming, I present to our people Dr. J. Sidlo Baxter of London, England. Dr. Baxter. Now, the message that I bring to you this morning is a quite simple one, and is based upon some brief but immortal words of the Apostle Paul.

In his first Philippian letter, chapter one and verse twenty-one, Philippians chapter one and verse twenty-one, we have these never-to-be-forgotten words. For to me to live is Christ, and to die, yes, even to die, and do I need to remind you that death is the natural man's most irreparable loss. At death he loses his friends, his relatives, his pursuits, his pleasures, his possessions, his everything.

Death is the monster loss to the natural, worthy man. But to the Christian, even death is gain. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

When we write a telegram, we generally seek to use the smallest number of words with the greatest amount of meaning. Verbosity in any kind of telegraphic communication is as extensive as it is superfluous. Always our telegram ideal is a minimum of syllables with a maximum of meaning.

Now it always seems to me, dear friends, as though this text is for all the world like an inspired telegram, coming down to us through the centuries from the old prison house in Rome, where the now-aging apostle

was temporarily incarcerated, clear, concise, cut down to minimum syllables, and yet conveying a titanic amount of meaning. To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Brief as it is in our English rendering of the text, the original Greek is even coarser, where it simply reads, To me to live, Christ, to die, gain.

Isn't it telegram-like? To me to live, Christ, to die, gain. Well now, in this brief morning service, I'm quite persuaded we do not have ample time to consider both components of this apostolic telegram. So let us concentrate briefly upon the first half only.

To me to live is Christ. Dr. Criswell and members and friends of this great Church of the Lord, this is the first Sunday morning of 1965 anno Domini, and I take it upon myself as a sacred privilege to suggest this text as your 1965 motto. To me to live is, one word, Christ.

Now I think it's always good for a preacher to be on interrogative terms with his listening people. Let me become interrogative at this point. Dear brother, dear sister in Christ, can you say with 100% genuine meaning that for you to live is Christ? Now I can sympathetically anticipate that more than half a dozen will be inwardly saying, Mr. Preacher, I think I could answer that question more clearly, more promptly, if I understood more exactly all that Paul means when he says to me to live is Christ.

Well it's just that that I want to talk to you about. What did Paul mean when he said to me to live is Christ? Let's go into that a little. Somehow whenever my own grateful eyes linger over these immortal Pauline words, there are three great ideas streaked before my mental vision.

One, here is the secret of a truly great life. Two, here is the inmost mystery of the Christian experience. And three, here is something that is not mere theory but magnificent reality.

To me to live is Christ. I doubt whether we'll get even through those areas this morning. I have always found that the clock goes more quickly in Texas than anywhere else in America.

But we'll start anyway with those three territories. Take the first of them. Here we have the secret of a truly great life.

To me to live is Christ. I dare not claim to be an exhaustive student of human biography, nor do I think, however, that one needs to be an exhaustive student of history's great personages to decide who are the really greatest figures in history. If you were to ask me which two men I consider to be the greatest in all the catalogues of human history, I should reply without any hesitation, Moses and Paul.

Of course, I exclude our Lord Jesus because although he was really man, he was not merely man. He was the God-man. But among others, among those who are ordinary human beings, I would say it would be difficult to find two greater men than Moses, the venerable lawgiver of the Old Testament, and Paul, that Christ-intoxicated little genius of the New Testament.

If you and I are to judge men by the purity and the profundity and the loftiness and the continuity of their impacts upon succeeding generations, I think we would find it difficult to outmatch Moses and Paul. Do I need to remind you, my beloved American cousins, that your American democracy and our British democracy, your American and our British legal systems to this very day are founded upon the ethics of Moses. And may I be permitted to add that your American democracy and our British democracy owe more to these prolific, dynamic, apostolic letters of Paul than to any other single influence.

And as I travel around the 48 states, indeed we've been to 49 out of the 50 now, we are getting well-travelled, but I would say if there's one great need in the 48 states of the American mainland, it's this, back to the Bible, and in particular, back to these great, emancipating epistles of the Apostle Paul. I believe that an American return to the teaching of Paul would be the greatest blessing that could come to America just now. Don't you think so? Well, I say again, I think you would find it difficult to discover anywhere in the pages of the history books two greater men than Moses and Paul.

Now, you and I, just because we are normal human beings, are so constituted that when we are confronted by a truly great human life or personality, almost inevitably we find ourselves asking, what was his secret? What was her secret? Now, in the case of Paul, there may be hints and clues scattered throughout the Acts of the Apostles and through his epistles, but if you want the concentrated focus point of it, here it is. It's all in a word, to me to live is Christ. And if he had not been able to write that, you and I would never have heard of Saul of Tarsus.

That made all the difference, to me to live is Christ. Now, may I ask you to get ready for a gentle shock. It may not come as a shock to all of you, but it will to some of you.

But I'm going to say it. It's so pleasant. It's so true.

It's so vitally important. I hope you will believe it. It's just this.

My dear friends, yes, get ready. Are you ready? I'll say it. My dear friends, you are meant to be great.

Oh, says somebody, you're teasing. No, I'm not. Oh, but you say, if you knew the subnormality of my gifts, if you knew the obscurity of my social circumstances, if you knew my hereditary legacy of inward difficulties of disposition, if you knew far more about me than you do, Mr. Preacher, you would know that I could never be great.

Well, in a way, I'm glad I don't know you any more familiarly than I now do. Because, if I did, it would only accentuate what I'm going to repeat. I don't care who you are.

If you are a sinner washed from your damning guilt in the precious blood of God's dear Lamb, if you are born again from Heaven by the regenerating Divine Spirit, then I say to you with this open book, you are meant to live a great life. Oh, think of that as you come into 1963. You are meant, I am meant, this year, to live a great life.

Of course, the trouble with nine out of every ten of us is that we have an astigma concerning greatness. Somehow, it seems almost in any radically constitutional for most of us to think that greatness has to do with notoriety, popularity, social prestige, or possession of great wealth, and so on. But we are lamentably wrong.

Greatness, true greatness, has nothing to do with those mere accidentals and ornaments. It was said of John the Baptist before he was born, He shall be great in the sight of the Lord. Friends, that's the only greatness that truly matters.

That's the only greatness that pleases God and blesses men and really develops our personal potencies. Greatness in the sight of the Lord. There is no true greatness apart from goodness.

And all true goodness is real greatness. May I remind you, as we had it in the tenth chapter of the Acts, that when the Apostle Peter suddenly had to epitomize the earthly life of our Lord Jesus and Master, this is what he said, Who went about doing miracles? I beg pardon, he didn't say that at all. He said this, Who went about doing good? Now, I speak reverently.

If you think about it carefully, what was the intrinsic greatness even of God's incarnated Son? Was it his miraculous power? No. The inherent, the supreme greatness of our Master was that he was good. And every blood-brought member of the ecclesia is meant to be good.

Now, of course, I'm sure that your dear pastor is just as concerned as I myself am. Whenever he uses that word good, I'm sure he feels as I do. We're always terrified, lest anybody listening to us should think that we can be saved by our goodness.

Oh dear, no. So far as eternal salvation is concerned, all our supposed righteousnesses are as filthy rags in the infinitely holy eyes of God. If you and I are to be saved from the damnation of Gehenna, where the flame is never quenched and the worm never dies, it must be by grace alone on God's part, and through the atoning blood of Christ on Calvary, and by a new birth effected within us by the Holy Spirit.

We are saved, not by human goodness, of which there is absolutely none, but we are saved by divine grace which is infinite toward us in Christ. Dear pastor, have I said that categorically enough? But once we have it clearly in our minds that we cannot be saved by any intrinsic goodness of our own, we come back to this, that once we are washed in the redeeming blood of Christ and are born by the Holy Spirit, then, yes, not to be saved, but because we are saved, we are meant to be good. I didn't say goody-goody.

I said good. We are meant to be truly religious. I didn't say religiosities.

I said religious. We are meant to be truly sanctified. I didn't say sanctimonious.

You know, my dear Ethel and I spent our last twenty years in Edinburgh, in Britain, living in Edinburgh, Scotland. We are not Scottish. We are English.

But we lived twenty years in Scotland, and what a wonderful completion of our education that was. You've never really finished until you've been to Edinburgh. You've never really finished until you've been to Edinburgh.

Well, now, in Scotland they have some very interesting institutions. Let me mention one of them. The one to which I refer is called the Annual Sunday School Picnic.

Do you have anything like that in these backward parts? The Annual Sunday School Picnic. Oh, the Annual Sunday School Picnic. It's a wonderful occasion, the Annual Sunday School Picnic.

I'll tell you something else about the Annual Sunday. It nearly always rains. Oh, we get a lot of rain in Scotland.

Of course it's free. And the weatherman seems to have a chronic grudge against the Annual Sunday School Picnic. I want to tell you about one of them.

When the day dawned, it came in with what we call in Scotland a drizzle. Do you know what a drizzle is? Oh, a drizzle. Well, I'll tell you what a drizzle is.

It's just drizzles. And the day came in with a drizzle. However, the teachers and the scholars, they gathered together at the Sunday School with undamped spirits, but very damp clothes, and they got into three charabons, as we call them, motorcoaches, and away they went in these motorcoaches to the semi-rural area where the playing field was.

Of course, they couldn't play any games in the field. They were sopping wet. ... who was a genius, had anticipated the naughtiness of the weatherman, and he had charted a great big double-sized old-fashioned barn.

And into this iggledy-piggledy, old-fashioned, very spacious barn, they gathered all the scholars of the school, and the superintendent said, Boys and girls, we're going to have a great time of it. Never mind the weather. We're going to have some games inside the barn, and we'll make a start.

And getting a piece of chalk, he made a line across the iggledy-piggledy floor of that rambling barn. And then he said, Now, first of all, the girls. I want all the girls to stand on this side of the line who, when they grow up, want to be nurses.

And all the girls to stand on this side of the line who, when they grow up, want to be married, and have homes and families of their own. Why he should make such a hard and fat cleavage between those two categories, I don't know. That was part of his hidden genius.

When the girls had sorted themselves out, he said to the boys, Now, boys, it's your turn. I want all the boys to stand on this side of the line who, when they grow up, want to be great. And all the boys on this side of the line who, when they grow up, want to be good.

Oh, great or good. I know what those Scottish boys would have said if they'd been American. There's only one word that fits it.

They'd have said, Hmm, great or good. Wow. Hmm.

I've only learned that since I came here. Wow. I think it is the most expressive, the most expressive monosyllabic I've ever heard.

Wow. And they got their little brains cogitating, and then some of the boys got up, and they came and stood on this side of the line for great. And there they stood like embryonic Napoleons only waiting for global recognition.

They wanted to be great. Some of the boys came and unabashedly stood on that side of the line. When they grew up, they wanted to be good.

And there they stood like little cherubs who had accidentally strayed out from the gates of glory. Are there some Sunday school teachers here? Shall I tell you what those Sunday school teachers noticed? On the side for good were some of the most cantankerous little villains in the Sunday school. So cheer up, Sunday school teacher.

You never know what's working in those little hearts of mine. Well, there they stood, the greats and the goods, all but one boy. And he couldn't make up his mind.

There he sat. I remember his name. His name was Percy.

And Percy couldn't decide, so at last the superintendent said, Now, come on, Percy, you'll have to make up your mind. And Percy did. He gave a look at that line, and then he came and he did this.

He put one foot on one side and the other foot on the other. And I think that young Percy had roundly rebuked that mistaken superintendent. The superintendent had blundered badly.

You can't put even a short line between great and good. You can't. All true goodness, oh, brothers and sisters, I can't think of anything I would love to deserve more than this.

But upon my gravestone, if ever I have one, it should simply say, He was a good man. Most of us grab back to the spectacular. We're wrong, we're wrong.

That means nothing to God, but it means everything to Christ. When you're good, the greatest person you'll ever meet is a good man, a good woman. Well, in the remaining minute or two that I have, let me ask and answer the question, how did the Apostle Paul become the great, the good, the self-forgetting, magnanimous man that he was? It's all here.

To me, to live Christ. What then did he mean when he said that? Well, let's get this clear once for all. Whatever else the Apostle Paul may or may not have meant, he certainly did mean this in the first flush meaning of the words.

All that I ever was, all that I now am, all that I ever can or shall be, all that I have of this world's goods, in the sum totality of my personality and possibilities, in one lifelong irrevocable utter surrender I have given to Christ. I say he meant more than that, but he meant that right on the very surface of the words. He had given himself once for all in utter totality to the monopoly of Jesus Christ.

Sidlow Baxter, have you? Fellow de Lieber, have you? I think dear old General Booth of the Salvation Army came to be Paul's next-door neighbor in this matter. When the dear old warrior was on walk proved to be his deathbed, some kindly curious relative asked him, Dear old General, could you tell us in a sentence what has been the secret of your amazing ministry? And the dear old, the dear old General, propping himself up on an elbow said, in his gruff, rough, bluff way, Well, I think if there's been any secret at all, it's just been this, Jesus has had every bit of me. Oh, that's grand, isn't it? It's the modern rendering of to me from it is Christ.

Jesus has had every bit of me. Now I'm challenging you lovingly but searchingly this first Sunday of 1965. Can you join Paul and General Booth to me to live is Christ, he's got every bit of me? There are some of us here this morning, we call ourselves Christian believers, but have we got real peace of heart and real rest of mind and real poise of life? There are some of us, although we are Christian believers, we are so soon agitated, so soon perturbed, so soon irascible.

We don't have the marks of similarity to our Master. He was never ruffled, he was never animated with fears. No, there was a wonderful solidarity and peace about Jesus.

Now, there are some of us here, and again and again we've come to the point where we were going to do it. We were really going to take the sacred risk of getting in everything, and then we looked round and we thought, what about Mr. So-and-so, what about so-and-so, what about this? And we're back to where again? Do you know what was the first thing I ever saw in this church of yours? I only saw it just as I passed, it was there on the wall, on the Sunday school wall. I saw it just for a second and I'll never forget it.

It said this, Give him all he asks, then take all he offers. Oh, you've got the whole secret there. You know, I think that many Christian believers in these days need saving all as much, almost as much from the druggist as they do from the devil.

This is the age of pills for tranquilizing and I don't know what else. Friends, what most of us are needing is utter consecration to Christ so that he may fill us and possess us and transform us and give us his peace and his radiance and his buoyancy and his gladness and his fullness of personality. But don't you see, he's really, really got to get us.

And it's always the same when once it happens, when once he really gets us, when once we settle over the precipice and think that we are going to be, to be lost in mid-air and crash down to something we can't think of. Just when we think that's going to happen, when we've stepped over the precipice, we find as we never thought we would that underneath are the everlasting arms of a love that never lets us down and never gives us up and never lets us go. But it all begins when we come with Paul and with General Boone and we say, Lord Jesus, from this moment, all I have and all I am, they're thine.

Oh, Dr. Criswell and friends, what a way that would be to begin, 1965. To me, to live, it...

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/3/SID3206.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-sidlow-baxter/for-me-to-live-is-christ/>

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