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# Making Death a Paying Proposition

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PAUL exclaimed, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

Nearly everybody is interested in life after death. Job asked, "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14). Even the vilest become interested when death threatens! The great question today is this, "Is there life after death?"

Some people do not have life after birth! They just exist. They breathe, eat, and sleep, but there is no life. Jesus came to give life. He said, "The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

How can we have a happy, victorious life? Many are miserable and unhappy. A thousand people per day commit suicide—twenty-five thousand in America each year. What is the cure for "ho-hum" living?

In Philippians 1:21 Paul is rejoicing. He was not in a palace, but in prison when he wrote this statement. There he sat in prison, adding things up. But he said, "I may die, but that is gain; I may live but that is gain. Heads, I win; tails, I win. If I continue to live, praise God! And if I die, Praise God!" The emperor could cut off his head, but he could not head him off! Whatever happened to Paul, he was going to come out a winner! Even in prison he was happy.

## I. "TO LIVE IS CHRIST"

What did Paul mean when he said, "To live is Christ"?

*The source of life is Christ.* He received life from Christ. Paul said,

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of

God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me (Galatians 2:20).

He also said,

Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, . . . Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:6-8, 11).

John said, "In Him was life" (John 1:4). If you do not have Jesus, you do not have life. You might have existence, but you do not have life. In the Bible, death is not only the separation of the soul from the body, but also the separation of the soul from God. Life does not begin at forty—life begins at Calvary! This is what makes Christianity different from other religions of the world. You take Buddha out of Buddhism and you still have Buddhism. You take Confucius out of Confucianism, and there is still Confucianism. But if you take Christ out of Christianity, there is no more Christianity. Christianity is not one more religion. It is not subscribing to a creed or a list of rules. Christianity is a vital relationship with a Person. Christ lives in us and we live in Him. According to John 15, Christ is the vine and Christians are the branches. That is why Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." When you get married, you do not get the marriage religion, you get a wife. When you are saved, you do not get the Christian religion, you get Christ. Remember, religion does not save you; Christ saves you.

*The strength of life is Christ.* Paul said, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"

(Philippians 4:13). Men are capable of performing tremendous feats with Jesus. Look at what Moses could do with God's help. Think of what Samson could do with God's help. If you want strength, rely on Christ. If you need help to love the unlovely, rely on Christ. If you need help in overcoming a bad habit, rely on Christ. We are so weak without Him. A glove has no life unless a hand is inside. Whatever Jesus can do, I can do. Jesus said, ". . . he that believeth on Me, the works that I do, he shall do also; and greater works than these shall he do. . . ." (John 14:12).

*The satisfaction of life is Jesus.* Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). Every day we ought to be rejoicing. Do you say, "That is easy for you to say, Wayne. You do not have the problems I have"? Friend, I am not the one who said it. Paul did. Consider his situation when he said it. He was in prison. Jesus gives satisfaction in every situation. Listen to Paul:

Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need (Philippians 4:11, 12).

Jesus is not just for the sweet by-and-by; He is also for the nasty now-and-now. Jesus not only gives years to life, but life to years. He gives satisfaction right now.

*The standard of life is Jesus.* Paul wrote:

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).

The goal of his life was to be like Jesus. He said, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Romans 8:9 says: "If a man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." We are exhorted, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). Paul said, "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the

Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Young people today need a song to sing, a flag to wave, and a hero to follow. Jesus is all three.

*The subject of my life is Jesus.* Paul declared,

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).

Jesus was all he wanted to talk about, the only song he wanted to sing. Paul was chained to a man, Christ. What is the subject of your life? Some churches never hear about Jesus.

## II. "TO DIE IS GAIN"

Paul was not afraid to die. He was willing to go but wanted to stay. The same should be true of us. Heaven is our home, but we are not lonesome! After Paul had a vision of heaven, he wanted to go there. God told Paul, "You cannot tell people about what you have seen." We need a new attitude toward death. We look at somebody in a casket and say, "Oh, look at him or her." He or she is not there! (2 Corinthians 5:7, 8). The body is in the ground, but the Spirit goes to be with God. At death we enter a new relationship. We have a new freedom (1 John 3:2; Philippians 3:20, 21). We have a new fellowship. You will die. Will it be gain or loss? If you are a Christian, it will be the first day of the rest of your life.

## CONCLUSION

We have thought about Paul, but what about you? I want you to be honest. How would you finish the sentence, "For to me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_"? What is the umbrella over your life? What is the source, strength, satisfaction, and standard of your life? What comes first? Some say, "For to me, to live is money." They may believe in Jesus, but they cannot say to die is gain. How much will you leave? You will "leave it all." Therefore you must say, "For to me, to live is money and to die is loss." Some say, "For to me, to live is pleasure." If pleasure is your number one goal, then for you to die is loss. No fun and games are found in a Christ-less grave. Some say, "For to me, to live is fame." "But the mossy fingers of time will pull down your monuments; the foul breath of decay and the gnawing tooth of the centuries will take away fame; you will be forgotten." Some

say, "For to me, to live is family." If I live for my family, death will bring loss. You will kiss all your family goodbye; there are no family relationships in a Christ-less grave. Some say, "For to me, to live is education." Education cannot save you. I would rather be in heaven saying my "ABC's" than in hell with my Ph.D.!

If you put anything at the end of the sentence but Christ, then to die is loss to you. If you put Christ first, then to die is gain!

A wealthy woman lay dying. She was asked to sign papers to insure smooth transactions after her death. She was feeble, but agreed. Later when she died, they looked at the papers and, she had signed "Jesus," the only word that meant anything to her. The only way your life ever makes any sense is to be on your knees before the old rugged cross, saying, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

—J. Wayne Kilpatrick

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