

PAUL'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

"For to me to live is Christ". -- Philippians 1:21

No one so wondrously fulfilled the ideal of Christianity as did Paul. He is the most remarkable Christian of the centuries; the greatest single credential that the gospel of Christ has ever produced. No one ever lived a more heroic and victorious life than Paul. His life was a model of excellence. He was the most representative, most joyous, and most triumphant Christian the world has ever known. Yet if any man ever had an excuse for being discouraged and despondent, that man was Paul. His whole career was filled with adversities. He was suspected, falsely accused, hated, pursued, and stoned. He was hungry, cold, sick, and lonely. Even while in prison, with the shadow of death hanging over him he wrote the whole story of Christianity out of his own experience in the words: "For to me to live is Christ." Whether he was looking to the past, at the present, or into the future, wherever he turned his eyes, he saw only Jesus Christ. All the strength of his faith, all the fulness of his hope, and all the longings of his soul were centered in Him.

I. Christ is The Source of Life.

Paul was not a person who simply drifted on the sea of life without an aim or a purpose. Prior to his salvation, his aim was to attain righteousness by keeping the Jewish law. Following his revolutionary experience on the road to Damascus, his ambitions, purposes, and efforts were centered in Christ. But, Paul reckoned his life only from the day that Christ was born within him through the power of the Holy Spirit. It was then that Christ entered Paul's heart, took possession of him, and ruled and reigned in his life. From that day, he really began to live.

Christ is the source of our existence. He is the fountain of life, and all life is from Him, by Him, and in Him. Only those who have received Him really live. Real life actually begins when we are united with Christ, who is the source of all life. When Christ is truly accepted, the Holy Spirit enters the heart, takes possession of the affections, enlightens the understanding, awakens the right desires, and moves the will.

From the text, it is quite clear that to exist and to live are widely different conditions. All who breathe exist, but those who really live are the ones who have sacrificed their ambitions, and have dedicated their minds, strength, and undivided energies to Christ.

Christ supplies the motive for all useful and worth-while living. Without proper motive life is insipid and wearisome. Many are without a motive in life and therefore feel like Macaulay, who wrote: "If I had another month of such days as I have been spending, I would be impatient to get down into my little, narrow crib in the ground like a weary factory child." However if Christ is accepted and enthroned in the life, the transformation will be startling. When self is completely yielded to the Lord Jesus Christ the life will be a new one. If you will watch a man with Christ as the motive of his life, you will see the one who arises in the morning grateful that he is alive and retires at night thankful that he has lived another day.

II. Christ is The Support of Life.

"For to me to live is Christ." What did Paul mean by this statement? He must have meant that inasmuch as Jesus Christ had imparted a new nature to him and he was drawing all his resources from Christ, he was becoming more and more possessed of those qualities and attributes which go to constitute the Christ-nature. He was becoming more and more Christ-possessed and Christ-like.

Christ was magnified in his life. The presence of Christ filled his conscious existence, and communion with Christ was to him the very breath of life. His real life was hidden with Christ whose presence filled his soul. He was dead unto the world, but alive unto God. He was conscious of high thoughts burning within him. Life was worth living because the power of Christ was felt in his soul and life. There was a power and an energy that lifted him up, strengthened him, and filled him with a calm and holy joy in all his numerous trials. The outward life, with its hardships or its comforts, was as nothing in comparison with the inner life of the spirit.

The Christian lives on Christ. Christ is the support of the life He has given, nourishing it with communications from Himself. The Christian's life is supported by Christ. As the heart sustains the body, and the vine sustains the branches, so Christ sustains and supports all spiritual life. Jesus said: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:4-5

No one can truthfully say, "to me to live is Christ," until he has received Christ as Saviour and enthroned Him as Lord. When Christ dwells in the human heart there is sufficient power for every emergency. In fact, He wants to give us more blessings than we are willing to receive and utilize. No matter what opposing forces the believer may have to meet, he has nothing to fear, because he possesses adequate resources in Christ. This power of the indwelling Christ is sufficient for every emergency, victorious over every obstacle, fruitful of all good works, and full of complete satisfaction. Christ has never been defeated, and never will be.

When one really accepts the Lord Jesus, he has a Saviour and Master to enjoy, to live by, and to live for. He, like Paul, should confess his own helplessness and seek to reproduce Christ's life.

The reproduction of Christ's life is manifested in likeness to Him and in devotion to His service. This is the true secret of a life of blessedness. Therefore, we should let the spirit of the Master penetrate our entire lives, lifting us above every mean, sordid and selfish principle, and make the remainder of our lives one grand endeavor to reflect Christ.

III. Christ is The Summary of Life.

Jesus said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Matthew 22:37. Paul loved Christ with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. He loved Christ because He had first loved him and died for him. Because of his love for the Saviour, he dedicated himself to Christian service. He gave up everything for Christ; but he seldom referred to his sacrifices, and when he did, it was only to glory in the fact that he had laid everything on the altar for the Master. When Paul yielded himself completely, the Lord Jesus took possession of him and molded him according to His own gracious purposes. He regarded everything that he had to do, and everything that befell him only in their relation to and bearing upon Christ. All of his thoughts were brought into subjection to Christ. All of his interests, plans, activities, and hopes were centered in Him. In thought, word, and deed, Paul sought to reproduce the spirit, character, and life of Jesus. His only employment was the service of Christ. He considered it his privilege and duty to proclaim Christ's message to others and to share His life with them. In substance, he said: "Life equals Christ" or "Christ equals life." This conception always makes life exceedingly interesting and profitable.

Nevertheless, many do not agree that "life equals Christ." Some strive for fame, others live for a good time, and many live for gain. But none of these things appealed to Paul because his life was centered in Christ. He met Christ, heard His voice, felt His love, received His salvation, and found great delight in His service. He realized that happiness is the by-product of noble living and Christian service. He also regarded life as a wonderful opportunity to serve others and thus express his love to and for Christ.

Jesus Christ is the finest example of real living. He came to reveal God to men, to redeem men from sin, and to reconcile men to God. He glorified God and pleased Him in everything that He did. He is our example, and the only all-sufficient law for us is to follow Him. His touch upon our souls will create such a challenge that our time will be too short for us to do all that we should do, and at the end we shall exclaim with Cecil Rhodes: "So little done; so much to do!"

By serving others we shall be blessed in numerous ways. It is said that a little boy had some seed which he had decided to plant. While planting them, he observed a bare spot of ground. He said: "Little bare spot, I can help you." So, he dug a small hole, dropped the seed into it, and carefully covered the seed. Many years later, he returned to the same spot. Hot and tired, he lay down to rest in the shade of a beautiful tree. It never occurred to him that this was the tree which had grown from the seed he had planted in the bare spot many years before. As he rested and slept, the leaves of the tree seemed to whisper one to the other, "He blessed himself and he doesn't know it."

For what are you living? Paul said: "For to me to live is Christ." Are you living for anything less noble than this? If Christ is not the object and purpose of your life, then for what are you living? Each of us was created in the image of God. Life for us is certain to end in failure unless it brings us into harmony with Him. Real life then means to be in perfect accord with God's plans and purposes for us. Compare it as you may, this is the noblest life of all. No course of life can possibly compare with the one who can say: "For to me to live is to reproduce Christ, to reflect His spirit, to carry out His purposes, and to follow as far as possible the pattern of His glorious life." Life from Christ, life in Christ, and life for Christ, should result in a life more Christ-like.

Have you received life from Christ? Are you living in Christ? Are you living for Christ? Can you truly say, "For to me to live is Christ?"

"Living for Jesus a life that is true,
Trying to please Him in all that I do;
Yielding allegiance, glad-hearted and free,
This is the pathway of blessing for me."