

" TO LIVE IS CHRIST"

"For to me to live is Christ." Philipians 1:21.

For Paul things had turned out quite differently from what he expected when he expressed his desire to go to Rome. He was not interested in going to Rome on a sight-seeing tour, but for the purpose of preaching the gospel of Christ there. In Jerusalem he had been arrested for preaching Christ. To escape unjust and cruel treatment he had exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar. After a long and stormy voyage Paul arrived in Rome and, as a prisoner, he was placed in the custody of the praetorian guard. Even though he was not a criminal, he was chained to the wrist of a soldier. Encumbered with a chain, cut off from his public ministry and with the threat of death hanging over his head, Paul was nevertheless victorious in spirit. He refused to allow circumstances to sour or embitter him. Instead of complaining about his unjust imprisonment, Paul rejoiced in the fact that, inasmuch as he was the servant of the Lord, in the line of duty and doing God's will, everything that befell him was for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel of Christ.

Paul was the most remarkable Christian of the centuries; the greatest single credential that the gospel of Christ has ever produced. He was the most representative, joyous and triumphant Christian the world has ever known. No other Christian has ever lived as heroically and victoriously as Paul did, and yet his career was filled with adversities. Paul was suspected, falsely accused, hated, pursued and stoned. He was subjected to hunger, cold, sickness and loneliness. While chained to a soldier, with the shadow of death hanging over him, Paul expressed his profound philosophy of life in one comprehensive sentence, "For to me to live is Christ." Whether he was looking to the past, at the present or into the future, all the strength of his faith, all the fulness of his hope and all the longings of his soul were centered in Christ.

Startling in their simplicity are the words: "For to me to live is Christ." Yet, they express the aim, the purpose, the inspiration and the principle of Paul's life. The personal pronoun has the emphatic place in the sentence. It means far more than in my opinion. He was simply declaring, this is what life means to me, regardless of what it may mean to others. Paul rejoiced to be able to testify that, so far as he was concerned, life had come to mean Christ, nothing less and nothing more. His remarkable statement should impress indelibly upon the mind of every Christian three important truths.

I. Christ Is The Source Of Life.

Prior to his salvation Paul's aim had been to attain righteousness by keeping the Jewish law. Then one day on the road to Damascus Paul had a revolutionary and transforming experience when Christ saved him. Thereafter Paul reckoned his life from the day when Christ entered his heart and took possession of him. That was the day when he really began to live.

It is quite clear that to exist and to live are not the same. All who breathe exist, but those who really live are the ones who have received Christ as their Saviour and have dedicated their minds, strength and energies to Him.

Christ is the source or fountain of life. All life is from Christ, by Him and in Him. Real life actually begins when one receives Christ as his Saviour and is united with Him, Who is the source of life. When Christ is truly received, the Holy Spirit enlightens the understanding, takes possession of the affections, awakens the right desires and moves the will.

It is Christ Who supplies the proper motive for all victorious and useful living. Without a worthy motive life is insipid and wearisome. Many of those who lack the proper motive have somewhat the attitude that was expressed by Macaulay in the statement: "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, those who accept Christ, Who is the source of life, and enthrone Him as the Lord of their lives, will discover that the transformation which takes place in them will be startling. When self is yielded completely to Christ, one will arise in the morning grateful that he is alive and will retire at night thankful that he has lived another day.

II. Christ Is The Sustainer Of Life.

"For to me to live is Christ." What did Paul mean by that statement? He must have meant that inasmuch as Christ had imparted to him a new nature and he was drawing all of his resources from Him he was becoming more like Christ. The presence of Christ filled his conscious existence. Communion with Christ was to him the very breath of life. He was dead to the world, but alive to God. To Paul life was worth living because the power of Christ was felt in his soul and life. That power lifted him up, strengthened him up, strengthened him and filled him with a holy joy in spite of his numerous trials.

Christ is the sustainer of the life He has given, nourishing it with communications and supplies from Himself. As the heart sustains the body, and the vine sustains the branches, so Christ sustains and supports the spiritual side of the Christian. Our Lord 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).

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 to use. No matter what opposing forces the believer in Christ may encounter, he has nothing to fear for the resources of Christ are adequate for his needs. The indwelling Christ enables a Christian to be victorious over every obstacle, fruitful of all good works and full of complete satisfaction.

III. Christ Is The Summary Of Life.

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.

"Jesus is all the world to me,
My Life, my joy, my all;
He is my strength from day to day,
Without Him I would fall.

When I am sad to Him I go,
No other one can cheer me so;
When I am sad He makes me glad,
He's my friend."

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."