***To Live is Christ

Colossians 2:18-19

COL-461***

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We are studying "The Error of Angelic Worship,” segment number 18, in Colossians 2:18-19.

The great prize spoken of in Colossians 2:18, which comes to the believer when he is placed in Christ, is the power to live a supernatural lifestyle. This is not only to live a godly lifestyle, but one which man on his own could simply never live. The Old Testament legal system of the Law never could produce that in people. But for the Christian, that is your privilege.

If we are living a Christlike life, that means that we do things the way Jesus Christ would do them, in any in any particular circumstance of life. Our thoughts are the kind of thought that he would entertain. Our speech is the kind of speech that would be appropriate to godliness. What is it that spoils all this, even in a Christian? Sin. And sometimes that sin can have deadly consequences. So, it's no small thing to say, "I can be Christlike," which means that you're saying, "I can beat the sin nature in its game of appealing to me with its lust patterns. I can beat the world system, which is all around me, seeking to bring me down into its corrupt lifestyle. And I can beat Satan, who is seeking to sneak up on me and cause me to stumble. To be Christlike is not only a good thing, but it is the essential thing. You will not be protected in this world very long if you do not walk by means of the Spirit of God. And everything that the Lord Jesus Christ did in His humanity on this earth, He did it on the basis of biblical principles, and of the power of the Spirit of God. Since He was sinless, the Spirit of God always was with Him.

For you and me, that spirit is in dwelling as permanently. He never leaves us. But the effectiveness of His ministry is dependent upon whether we are walking in fellowship with our Heavenly Father. When we're not, that spiritual power system just blows out. And when it goes, you're back as if you were not even a Christian, in trying to deal with sin; Satan; and, the world.

The spiritual maturity of the Christlike Christian, includes the facets, as we looked at, of: spiritual maturity; grace-orientation mental attitude; the mastery of details of life; the capacity to love; and, inner happiness. Paul sums up Christ's prize, that Colossians 2:18 speaks of, which is ours as Christians, in Philippians 1:21, where he says, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Literally, what is says in the Greek is, "For me, the living." "The living" refers, with this particular word, to the very essence of life. It isn't talking about your daily experience, as you go about your business, walking through your day. This is something eternally that I am, and that is what I am living out.

Now, we can understand is on a physical level. If you are in good physical condition, you're going about your life in a certain kind of vitality and capacities, and you're able to do things. But if the physical body is degenerated, and diseased (incapacitated), then you slow down. And the living is considerably less. The living is considerably less powerful. Why? Because what you are has been deteriorated on a physical level. The same is true on a spiritual level. Paul says, "When we are up to speed of being Christlike in our living, then the very essence of our spiritual being is to be godly – holiness. That's what the Lord Jesus was.

The Greek word for "life" connotes this character – the quality of holiness. This is in contrast to the character quality of sin and death. Paul refers to this quality of life of blessedness as one who is in fellowship with God the Father. It's a blessed relationship to have with Him – to walk through the world (to walk through your day) as a friend of God. I think anybody who does not want to walk through his daily world as a friend of God is simply out of his mind. To walk as a friend of God – what does that mean? It means that you have all the omnipotence, omniscient, and omnipresence of deity at your disposal moment-by-moment. That is a reality – for you. It was not a reality for the Old Testament people, but it is for you.

And Paul sums it all up in one word. Paul says that the quality of his daily living is summed up in the word "Christ." The option of living – Paul says, "For me, the living is Christ." In the Greek language, it doesn't say, "*The* Christ. So, when it doesn't include the "*the*," it is just saying "such a person" as Christ: "For me, to live is godliness. It is holiness. It is the Son of God in His finest humanity. It is kind of hard to say that, isn't it? Think about ourselves. I would be very careful. Those words do not fall very quickly off our lips: "For me to live is to be Christ Himself," in effect of what we are in character. The Lord Jesus Christ was a standard of Paul's living which finds expression, then, in his experience.

He indicated this when he wrote to the Galatian Christians. Please turn to Galatians 2:20-21 in your Bible (or in our loaner Bible). You don't have to sit in church anymore without a Bible to follow the text. The apostle Paul says, "I've been crucified with Christ." What he is telling us is that what is in 1 Corinthians 12:13, that every believer is baptized into Christ at the point of his salvation, he is telling us that we have been permanently placed in Christ. And as Jesus said: "You and me, and I in you:" So, Christ is in us, and we are in Him. What does that mean? It means that everything that He is, and everything He has done is the same as if you did it. When He lived that sinless life, it's the same as if you did it. When H carried the penalty of death on the cross, you were there dying with Him. When He went into the grave, you were there with Him. That's the symbol of our water baptism. And when He arose from the dead, you rose with Him. To what? To a newness of life, where you are no longer the slave of sin.

"I have been crucified with Christ." That is a tremendous statement. But it is only true of a Christian who has trusted in Christ as personal Savior. So, you can see how it is a very small number of the human race. Most of the religious, opinionated people of our society are not even born again spiritually – those who think that they are saved by some human work act such as the Mass; the Lord's Supper; or, water baptism. Those people cannot say, "I've been crucified with Christ. Therefore, they cannot have the life of Christ living in them. That's the point. All they have is their old pitiful sin nature capacities.

Then Paul says, "Consequently, it is no longer I who live." When I walk through my day, I'm alive, and I'm acting as there is a life in me that's pouring out, but it is not my life. It is now the life of Christ Who lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God. I live by knowing church-age doctrine. I live by knowing what it is to maintain my temporal fellowship. I live by knowing what are my spiritual gifts. I live by being very careful that I practice those spiritual gifts. And, most important of all, I feed my spiritual life on the Word of God. I get an enormous supply at morning and evening church services at Berean, because we are an explanatory ministry. And the result is that you're head-and-shoulders above all the ordinary Christians that you run around with.

Even if you are in other groups where you are studying the Bible, tell me, how many times have you been in a Bible class, and the teacher stood up and said, "We were about to talk about things that are spiritual phenomena. These things are of the spiritual life, and they cannot be learned intellectually. No matter how much you concentrate, you will never pick this up by IQ. It must be the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. But until you reach up there and turn that knob on (the receiving instrument), it's no good. God is always sending. His sending instrument is always there. But if your instrument is not open because you're in fellowship with God the Father, and you're going through a Bible class, and these people are sitting there, and they haven't been told: "Let's start the meeting by using 1 John 1:9, and get yourself into fellowship with the Father, so that the Holy Spirit will teach you these things," it could be the best Bible class in the world, just as accurate as it can be, but if I see a teacher who doesn't stand up before the group, and say that right off the bat, that teacher is suspect, and you ought to say adios, "Adios, muchacho." When you don't let people know that they are dealing with spiritual phenomena, and not natural things, then you have let them down.

**Religion**

This is the problem. What is that called? Religion. And that's what most Christians go through. They go through religion. They go through the Mass. They light the candles. They do the incense. And they do all the holy days observations. That's religion.

Go to the grocery stores, now that we live in a prominent Hispanic area. You can go to the grocery stores and buy the votive candles, with Mary's picture on it. You take that, and you like that in your home. Why do you do that? Some of you light these little candles with incense just for the perfuming, and for the attractiveness. But they do it to go to heaven. So, this is a work system. And as that candle burns down, they have knocked themselves years and years out of purgatory. That's a good business. If you're a little short on cash, I suggest you get a supply of candles, and sell them on the side.

I live by faith in the son of God, which means that I live by the fact I know doctrinal concepts, and I know how to live the spiritual life in the church-age, by Christ, Who delivered Himself up for me. Paul says, "That's how I live.

Now this verse 20, before we get to 21, is even more impressive than we've already seen by what it says, if you go back up to verse 11, so that you get the background of why he said this. This was a squabble in the early church between Paul and the apostle Peter, who was a great apostle to the Jews. Paul was a great apostle to the gentiles. And it's good that we should be aware of what the problem was. And when Paul finishes telling (giving us the historical account of what took place between him and Peter, then he says, "I've been crucified." The significance of that statement has to be viewed on the basis of verse 19: "For through the Law (the Mosaic Law), I died to the Law so that I might live to God."

Now, what's it all about in Colossae? The teachers are telling them: "Folks, go back to the Mosaic Law. Go back to the rituals of the Mosaic Law. Go back to circumcision. Go back to all the holy days and festivals. Go back to all the procedures of the Mosaic Law, which are meaningless now, and live the Mosaic Law lifestyle." Paul said, "The day I died to the Mosaic Law, and turned my back upon the old system, then I really became alive to God, because all the Mosaic Law does is leave you dead. But once I walked away from anything that came out of the Old Testament and the Mosaic system, I became alive. The living kicked in of the spiritual life.

OK. In Galatians 2:11, another name for Peter, as you know, is Cephas: "But when Cephas came to Antioch." Peter had welcomed Paul as a new convert into the Christian community. He and James and John were there ahead of Paul, and they welcomed him as a new brother in Christ. And Peter came to Antioch. Antioch is up above Jerusalem. And it was a Christian center. And it was heavily Jewish: So, when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James (that is, from the church down in Jerusalem – men who were legalists, and who wanted to go back to the Mosaic Law system of life), he used to sit down and eat with the gentiles." When some gentiles said, "Peter, were on our way to McDonald's. Do you want to join us?" You bet. He had no problem with eating with Gentiles. Now, Jews wouldn't eat with gentiles. Gentiles were called dogs. And a serious, dedicated Jew, under the Mosaic Law, would not eat with a gentile.

So, Peter, understanding grace, ate with the gentile Christians: "But when they (these legalists from Jerusalem) came, he began to withdraw, and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision" – fearing these legalist who were completely wrong, and who didn't know what they were talking about, and who did not have a perspective of the grace-age power system. And they are telling people: "Get your son circumcised. Get your tithing system in order. Get all these procedures under the holy days and the festivals, or you cannot go to heaven. They wouldn't just say, "You're not going to be blessed by God." They would even say, "You're not even going to heaven." Peter, our first pope, – here he comes in, and he's scared off by these legalists who came up to Antioch, and they're saying, "Do you see what's going on?"

So, all of a sudden, the gentile believer says, "Peter, we're going down to I-Hop. Do you want to go with us?" And Peter says, "Well, I've got another thing. I'm busy." And he wouldn't eat with them anymore. He wouldn't go out with them. He was drawing himself apart because he was afraid of what these people who were wrong were going to say about him. Were they going to verbally beat up on him? You betcha. And when you and I stand for church doctrine, do you think that the people who are legalists; the people who are in Reformed Theology; and, the people who are in these churches that have descended from reformation leaders, who never separated themselves from the Mosaic Law – do you think that those people are going to attack you? You betcha they will.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer was a Presbyterian – a theological line from John Calvin. There are many serious defects from that line of thought. I won't go into those tonight. But Dr. Chafer was pre-millennial. He was dispensation. He was pre-tribulation rapture. All of these things were completely condemned by Reformed Theology. And the Presbyterian denomination used to beat up on Chafer all the time, and wash their hands of him. So, he went out and started a seminary, which has had worldwide influence. And even in its weaker condition now, a student who is serious will get a view of orientation of theology and of doctrine of the church-age, and is head-and-shoulders above most anything else you can find.

So, in verse 13, the rest of the Jews joined him in the hypocrisy. There were other Jewish men. They were following Peter as their leader: "He's our leader." He's the one who has experience with Christ. He knows what church-age doctrine is. But if he won't eat with the gentiles, neither will they. Now, the hypocrisy was that these were all brothers in Christ. But Peter was treating the gentiles as if they were not brothers in Christ. He was treating them as if they were wrong, when they were the ones who, in truth, were right. What Peter was doing was trying to have them deny their prize in Christ – freedom from legalism.

Now, don't be too quick to say, "Well, yeah, I understand that. I'm not that way. It is the easiest thing in the world for you to be making deals with God. You think that that's grace by works: if you do certain things, then God will do certain things for you. That was the heart of the Mosaic Law. Don't fall into that trap.

So, the rest of the Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. Now, this is really sad. Barnabas was the young associate of Peter. Peter was his guide; his teacher; and, his director, as Paul was to Timothy. And here, Peter, instead of leading Barnabas with courage to stand for the power life of the Holy Spirit indwelling us – church-age doctrine; freedom in Christ; and, freedom from all the ritual and the procedures and all that, Peter has led his associate (his student) astray. That is very serious for small children. Remember that Jesus says, "If you offend one of these little ones, who is trusting Me, put a millstone (a big rock) around your neck, and find a nice lake, and throw yourself in. This is telling people that it's very serious to lead a child astray, and to lead a child in a lifestyle that he picks up, and then comes to spiritual injury at some point in his life later on.

Jesus rebuked his apostles when they didn't want these little people to be brought to Jesus so that Jesus could hold them and bless them. Jesus said, "This is what the kingdom of God is made of – people who are willing to be told the mind of God, and to obey it." How are you doing on that? Don't presume that you're willing to have the mind of God, and obey it. I'd bet you there's a lot of things you don't know about the Word of God that you've heard taught here at Berean; that is, you're holding a resistance back. Well, you can do that, but boy, will you regret that someday? So even this young fellow Barnabas is going down the same wrong road.

In verse 14, Paul says, "I came there; I'm looking at Peter; I'm watching Barnabas; I'm looking at how they're treating these gentile Christians. Paul says, "When I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, because Peter and Barnabas were not ignorant of grace way of life, they just were afraid of these legalists. So, they went along with them. Which of your relatives are you afraid of when they come along for you to act in your full Christian grace? To which of your relatives, when they come visit you, are you afraid to say, "This is Sunday morning, and we go to church on Sunday? This is Sunday evening. We go to church on Sunday evening. Would you like to come with us? If not, make yourselves at home. We'll see you in about an hour, or an hour-and-a-half."

They were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, and you and I can do the same thing. We could be not straightforward about the importance of spiritual food, and we can try to hide that from people that we, for some reason, would be intimidated before, instead of saying, "This is the way it is." They might even say, "Maybe we ought to go with you," and you might lead them into green pastures.

So, Paul said, "I said to Cephas in the presence of all." Now this is no way to treat the first pope. He didn't just say, "Peter come on over here. I want to talk to you." He said, in the church service, "There's something I want to discuss here," because it was a doctrinal principle that affected everybody: "And I too am an apostle, and I speak for the Lord. I have the apostolic gift. I have direct communication from God. And I understand more than anybody else – more than all the other apostles." Paul said, "I understand grace-age principles. I understand the church dispensation." Why? Because he's the one that, after he was saved, was taken out into the Saudi Arabian desert. And for three years, God taught him the full gamut of church doctrine. That's why, when he wrote the letters to the churches, they were magnificent. They were absolutely true. They had everything revealed that we need to know to enjoy your prize.

It would be a terrible thing to win a prize, and not be able to claim it. Suppose that you, as I often do, dream of walking down the street; find a little piece of paper; and, I pick it up and I see that it's a lottery ticket. Some poor soul has lost his lottery ticket. Well, he's out of it now. So, I watch the newspaper, and the number comes up. And I say, "That's my number." Oh no, where's my ticket? I rush home. I rummage through everything. Mrs. Danish has cleaned house. My lottery ticket is gone. I've lost my prize. You wouldn't like that, would you? But that's just nothing. That's just temporal things. After you're gone, that's not going to make any difference. But think about the prize of your spiritual life, and all that it will produce in divine good works – treasures in heaven. That's a terrible prize to lose.

So, Peter Paul says, "I have to square this away for all of you, because you're going to pay at the Judgment Seat of Christ if this business of separation from the Mosaic Law, and that way of life, is not made clear. Paul says to Peter: "You, Peter, are being a Jew. But look at you. You live like the gentiles. You're not acting like a Jew anymore. You don't restrict yourself to all those Mosaic things. You're there, living the freedoms of Christ – not like the Jews. How is it that you compel gentiles to live like Jews? Now you come up here to Antioch, and you tell these gentile Christians that they have to live like Jews. Even you don't do that when you're back home."

In verse 15, Paul says, "We are Jews by nature. We are born that way. And we're not sinners from among the gentiles. We're not the gentiles. Nevertheless, knowing that a man is not justified (declared absolutely righteous) by the works of the Mosaic Law, but through faith in Christ Jesus person." A person is not saved by keeping anything of the Mosaic Law, and he is not blessed by it. In fact, if you keep the Mosaic Law, you will rob yourself of blessings galore. And it's so common in Christendom – you pick up these phrases because this is what Christians do in their lifestyle, right out of the Mosaic Law. If you do it, be prepared to pay the price. Through faith in Christ Jesus as the Savior – that's how a person is justified. Even we have believed in Christ Jesus. We haven't done something. "We have simply believed, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law." Why not? "Since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."

**How Good do you have to be to go to Heaven?**

How good do you have to be to go to heaven? As good as Jesus Christ. How good is that? Absolute righteousness. If you do not have absolute righteousness, you cannot go to heaven. That has to be imputed to you by the grace of God. You'll never get it through keeping the Mosaic Law.

So, in verse 17, Paul says, "But if while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? Oh God, may it never be." When he says, "May it never be," the Greek means, "God forbid:" Are we ourselves sinners because of Christ? No." We've been forgiven, and we should not act as if we were unforgiven.

Verse 18: "For I rebuild what I have once destroyed. I proved myself to be a transgressor." If I'm going to go around trying to please God by keeping the Mosaic Law, I don't know a Fig Newton about salvation by grace and sanctification by the grace of God. Christ lives in me – the power system of the Holy Spirit. I destroy the whole capacity.

Here's the kicker: back to verse 19: "For through the Law, I died to the Law, that I might live to Christ." That's when he comes in with 19, on the background of that dispute, and says that: "He has been crucified with Christ, and now he lives a life that is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ through Him. It is a life where Christ lives in me."

So, we may translate this phrase: "For me, the living is such a thing as Christ" – the life of Christ, through the believer, expressed through this spiritual maturity structure, with its five sides of the soul. "Living is Christ" means growing, and developing these facets of your spiritual maturity, which reflect the glory of God. You're not oriented to yourself. You're oriented to Christ. Paul is testifying to his own spiritual status here, in his imprisonment in Rome. He's living under terribly stressful conditions, but he says, "Hey, I'm here unjustly. All this has been unfair, but I'm living a life under these circumstances, and I'm under 24-hour guard with a, because I'm such a prize prisoner. I'm even chained to him. Day-after-day, two long years in Rome. He is under stressful circumstances, but he says, "How do I do it? In stride, because it is Christ living in me.

You may remember that, at the point of salvation, we've indicated that there are 36 magnificent realities that you receive as a believer. And all of these realities you receive permanently. Someplace on the tapes, we go through each one of these one by one, so that you have a prize – a prize beyond anything we could even comprehend. But not every Christian who owns these realities, at the heart of which is power of the Spirit of God living in us, the Christlike life – not all Christians go all the way to spiritual maturity. Many Christians are never fed spiritually until they grow up. Many Christians don't care. Many Christians are very happy to find a comfortable spot in the devil's world, and that's where they live their lives.

**Persistent Christians**

So, the result is you that have a variety of believers – different types of believers. You have believers who are persistent. They are learners of the Word of God. There are some Christians that are never going to be at home on a Sunday morning or Sunday evening when the doors to this place are open. They are the most serious of Christians. They are the most princely people in the royal family of God – the church age. And they are serious students of the Word of God. What they do is they go home, and they read over what they've heard explain. And that's why we have those extra Bibles. People grab them left and right – especially our visitors this morning. And they use them all the way, so that they focus upon with the Word of God has said. The word in Scripture is that they "meditate" upon it. You go home and you meditate upon what you have learned this day and this night, and the word "meditate" means that "you chew it over," so that it becomes nourishment to your soul. These persistent learners get spiritual benefits, and they develop a great spiritual maturity structure. We'll call them persistent.

**Erratic Christians**

They're another type of Christian. He's the erratic. He comes close to going with spiritual things, but he holds back. He slips off into the carnality of the world system. You never know whether this is a trustworthy person. You never know when that person tells you something, that you can depend upon it. He's erratic, and he's interested in the Word of God. He's interested in spirituality.

**Negligent Christians**

Then there's the negligent Christian. He never has anything built into his soul of a spiritual structure. Another way to look at this is the number-one Christian is a concerned Christian. A number-two Christian is the comfortable Christian. He doesn't want to upset his comfortable lifestyle.

Many years ago, a lady (that some of you would know the family name if I were to say it) told her husband she didn't want to attend Berean Church anymore, because the preaching reminded her of so many problems that people have in their lives that we need to be dealing with, and on guard. And she said, "I have enough problems in my own life to go to church and hear about it. So, they left.

Then there are the complainers. These are the number-three type in the royal family. They're the ones who are always complaining. They're always carrying on. They always know a better way.

Another way you can separate them is that the number-one type is called the spiritual Christian. The number-two type fluctuates between spirituality and carnality. He's the halfway Christian. And then, there is the carnal Christian. All these people are going to heaven. The spiritual Christian – his life is Christ living in him. His life is the power of God. His life is having those intuitive thoughts of divine guidance. And boy, is that great! The other person is on again and off again. The number-one type of Christian is a person you can count on. The number-two type of Christian, you can't even trust the promises. And the number-three Christian, you can't trust at all. He's completely carnal. He's out of step with God his Father completely.

Another way we can describe these three types of Christians is that the number-one type is involved. They're the ones that are here, and involved with what goes on at the ministry of the church. They know what we're up against. They don't forget what we do all week long. They're here with their talents, and with their spiritual gifts, and they are here and supportive. They're just involved in the Lord's work. They're not waiting for somebody else to do something that God burdens their *heart* to do.

The second type is the interested Christian. There are a lot of Christians who are interested, but non-committal. You might say to them: "What are you doing Thursday night?" And they would say, "Why?" They wouldn't say, "I'm not doing anything," because you might ask them to do something down at the local church. They're not about to say, "Nothing," because now they're going to have to tell you "No." That's a big sign.

Then, the third type here is just the indifferent Christian. This Christian just doesn't care. This Christian just doesn't care. This Christian that some brother or sister is in dire straits and need some help. They don't mind praying for him, but they don't want to help him. They have no interest in realizing that down at the local church, we have this need that needs to be met. Who will do it? We, who are members of this body, will do it. These who are involved are right there: at that offer box; at that service center; and, at that prayer meeting time.

These interested ones go part way, but with restraint. The indifferent ones don't care at all.

So, Christians range here from spiritual morons to super-grace, genius Christians. Or you can be moronic. Or they be halfway in their living, and the expression of the spiritual life of Christ. The fully-developed, spiritual-maturity Christian are a specialized princely group of church members. Those are the ones you can depend on. And the more the spiritual maturity structure matures in the believer, the greater he has of capacity for life. Many Christians just don't have a capacity for life. They have everything in the world. But they don't have happiness. They don't have satisfaction. They don't have a capacity to enjoy God, and to receive blessings galore – the blessings of grace, because they're not able to appreciate Christ in them, the hope of glory.

Now, the apostle Paul has, for many years, been walking with the Lord since that terrible experience that turned out so well on the Damascus Road, where he was going off to kill Christians, and to imprison them for believing in Christ, and he became a believer himself. Therefore, for these years, he has been building the spiritual maturity structure in his soul the same way as all the rest of us have to do. And he was developing a living – Christ living: "For him to live is Christ." He has learned the Word of God, as you have been learning it tonight. That's an understanding of your mind. But I know that, as you sat here, some of you have been receptive, and, by faith, you said, "That is exactly what the Word of God teaches. That is exactly the way it is. And I accept it. And it will guide my life." Others have reservations, perhaps. This believing those who believe it – that information goes down by an act of faith, and the work of the Holy Spirit into your human spirit. And what the Greek language calls "gnosis" knowledge becomes "epignosis" (usable knowledge) in the Greek. What you know up in your head is never carried through in life. That knowledge is not effective in the spiritual life. But what is stored in your human spirit, you have responded with: "Amen, Lord." That is positive volition, and that is usable knowledge. If you won't say "Yes" to the doctrines of spiritual principles, then how can the Lord lead you, because going to fight Him, and you're going to be mulish, and you're going to dig in. The "epignosis" that's in our human spirit (that full knowledge) is then cycled as we need it up to the mentality of our soul. And it guides us in our conscience, and it guides us in our thinking, and it guides us in our emotions.

We looked at that in detail last time. The divine viewpoint that that gives us, then builds our spiritual maturity structure with its five assets. And Christ lives out, through this Word stored in our human spirits. He lives it out in our experience. If you have no doctrine fed to you in your local church, you can blow away Christlike living. You're not going to have it. You'll never get it by emotions. The divine provision constitutes a living by grace.

So, suddenly, there's a great deal more behind Philippians 1:21: "For me, the living is Christ." Christians, where Christ is free to live in them, because they have grown up and matured. Now, you will find that mature Christians are very attractive people. They're a fun bunch, and they're the people you can count on. And they are the people who will receive your appreciation as you receive theirs. In the past, biblical Christians have sometimes been noted for rigidity; for unpleasant conduct; and, for depressing separation, because they thought that was pleasing to the Lord. But we call that legalism. And Christians who are like that are very tiresome. They're very unattractive believers. And they give the grace-oriented Christians the creeps. When you're around a legalistic Christian, they give you the creeps. And they think they're living Christ because they're grim. But this is a serious thing.

I had a person recently say to me. "No, I won't help you with that. I want to do this, and I'm not being permitted to do this, so where you need me, I won't help you." Yep! And I'm watching the gradual deterioration. You don't let Christ live through you. Then who is going to live your life? The sin nature? Just walk with your Heavenly Father as your friend. Just stop depending upon yourself to take care of yourself, and carry yourself through, beyond reasonable, prudent conduct. Living Christ is a spiritual maturity structure which is in full bloom – actions which produce relaxed happiness everywhere. This is how Paul said that he magnified Christ in his body: "For me, the human essence of aliveness – to live is Christ. He is my life." Legalistic Christians very often love to get up and quote this verse in their testimonies.: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." But they don't have the foggiest notion of what it is to have: "Christ living in me, the hope of glory."

If you don't understand this principle of the spiritual life, you don't understand the building of a spiritual maturity structure. You do not understand the need for spiritual food. You have to be very dumb not to know that. If you do not have spiritual food: the reading of the Word of God; the study of the Scriptures; and, the meditating upon what you've been taught, I tell you again, that little "Bible Pathway" book that we introduced you to – that's really a great help. It always has magnificent instruction. Yesterday, I was looking at a little paragraph, and I noticed that it is oriented to Christ living in me. It's not some stupid little Bible class, where they don't even tell you to confession before you begin. You know that you're out of the will of God right away. Bingo! That's rat hole – down the drain.

Paul says, "Don't be an immature Christian. Don't be at the moron level of the spectrum of spirituality. Get over here, to the genius side." And then see where your life takes you. And you will never know until you get to heaven. And boy, will you be glad that you took tonight's instruction (and this day's instruction) seriously. You will never regret it.

Now, there's another option. And Paul didn't know whether he was going to get hit with this or not. And that is "the dying:" "To die is gain." What few words are fraught with such enormous meaning, such that it is really sad when people glibly quote this, as if they knew what they were talking about. The option of living is great, but the option of dying is going to be there too. And the approach to that could make all the difference in the world. And we shall look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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