

Jesus Is Lord: The Christian Paradox

Philippians 1:21-30

Scripture → Philippians 1:21-30

Prayer

Big Idea: **Because of Christ we have freedom in life and victory in death**

Paradox: Paul triumphantly declares, “To live is Christ, to die is gain.” Right out of the gate the Apostle brutally attacks the greatest fears we have—death. This is the profound truth unveiled by the gospel: we are *not all dying – we are dead*. **Col 2:13** And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses.

The beautifully profound hope of the gospel is this: although we are all dead in our sins, we find life in the death of one sinless man: Jesus of Nazareth on the cross.

And when we find life in Jesus we now wage war against our flesh. As we find life in Jesus daily we must take up our cross and assault our sin daily. **Luke 9:23** Then he said to them all, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. Daily cross taking is a constant reminder of paradoxical living.

And as we daily take up our cross (a reminder of death) **2Cor. 4:16** Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. This is the Christian Paradox. No wonder the gospel (Christ crucified) is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles. So how do we live the paradoxical life?

Jesus is Lord: we began several weeks ago a new series entitled Jesus is Lord, a study in the book of Philippians. Concisely: **Jesus is Lord of all or He is not Lord at all. How important is it that Jesus is Lord? 15 times** in Philippians the author uses the word Lord.

For the Christ follower: Jesus is Lord is not a slogan, tattoo, t-shirt, bracelet, or neat religious title. It is a creed that guides everything we do.

The Army Rangers remind us of the power of a creed

Recognizing that I volunteered as a Ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession, I will always endeavor to uphold the prestige, honor, and high esprit de corps of the Rangers...

Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong and morally straight and I will shoulder more than my share of the task whatever it may be, one-hundred-percent and then some.

Gallantly will I show the world that I am a specially selected and well-trained Soldier. My courtesy to superior officers, neatness of dress and care of equipment shall set the example for others to follow... Surrender is not a Ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the Ranger objective and complete the mission though I be the lone survivor.
Rangers lead the way!

The **Purple Heart** is a [United States military decoration](#) awarded in the name of the [president](#) to those wounded or killed while serving. Many Rangers were injured or killed in action because they returned to the battle field. Why? Because they will never leave a man behind.

Why? Because the Ranger creed is not a recommendation is their life. **For the Rangers: this creed is all encompassing.** Creed = a set of beliefs or aims that guide someone's actions. Slogan = a short and striking or memorable phrase used in advertising

For many, Jesus is Lord is nothing more than a slogan = a memorable convenient phrase.

You can almost hear Paul echo these words: I will complete the mission though I be the lone survivor.. For Paul, Jesus is Lord was his creed. It was his life. And may the same be said of us. That to live is Christ and to die gain! **May Christ be our Lord, and everything we need!** Though I be the lone survivor I will live as Christ.

Paradox #1: To live is Christ (1:21)

If life is Christ, Paul gives us a wonderful example to emulate (leave no man behind).

We must live and work fruitfully. The Christ life is work. ἔργου – where we get our English: ergonomics, energy, or work. **Following Jesus is not a lazy man's game.** One commenter called growing in righteousness: spiritual sweat. When was the last time you worked for the gospel? ***May it never be said of us that the devil or demons outworked the people of God.***

Paul was also emphasizing to the church of Philippi that his work did not produce their righteousness. They were not called to watch Paul work and thus grow. ***No pastor, church, or devotion will grow you to what God wants.***

When we work for Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit it produces something: **fruit.** Again, Paul uses ***language that his Lord used.*** Jesus said good trees produce good fruit and bad trees bad fruit. Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven.

The question is not, are you producing fruit. **Everyone produces something.** What fruit are you producing? Good or bad? You do not determine the amount of your fruit, the size of your fruit, the type of your fruit, or the season of harvest. Some plant, some water, but God gives the increase. *Even if my fruitful work produces a raisin it will be for the glory of the Lord* (Its not your fruit it is His!) Paul points us to fruitful labor. If I live, it means fruitful work.

To live in Christ is a **Christ centered** life. Paul rejects any notion that he desires or can live for himself. The apostle's deepest heart is for others (1:24). This is not a call to be **man-pleasers**. Rather, we are called to be **men-fishers** and growers of men and women. We are called to promote and provoke (1:25) the progress of others and increase joy. **What would our communities, homes, neighborhoods look like if we commit to promote progress and joy in the lives of others that is only found in Christ?**

How does the gospel change? Progress/success = your success now is my success. The Gospel abolishes jealousy, envy, and strife. **Because Paul is in Christ he is living for we not me.**

(1:27) So what? So that their conduct would be worthy of the gospel. What is worthiness? No one is worthy! Firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together, and not being frightened.

The picture painted was a familiar one in the ancient world. When a great army was taken over by a new general, new standards and practices in warfare were demanded. News of this would take time to work through the ranks and many old soldiers preferred to remain loyal to what they knew. Those who knew and followed the new general would be a source of strength. The fact that they would hold their nerve would itself be a sign of their doubting fellow soldiers to the truth of the new king.

The Christ life is a life where we stand firm in one spirit in one accord because we know the true king! Are you doubting? Look to those standing beside you. See someone struggling, stand firm beside them!

Our paradoxical Creed: To Live in Christ!

Paradox #2: To die is Gain

And now Paul says something bizarre: to die is gain. Heaven is not the goal, Christ is the goal. You never find in the NT a believer longing for heaven. Rather, there is always a hunger to see Christ face to face. This is the power of the gospel, to live – Christ, to die gain (Christ). **1 Cor. 13¹²** *For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known.*

Author Randy Alcorn recalled a two-month missions trip that he and his family took some years ago that included a visit to Egypt. While in Egypt, Alcorn's hosts took him to visit an abandoned graveyard located at the end of a **garbage-lined alley**.

The host pointed out one tombstone in particular—that of William Borden (1887-1913), heir to the Borden dairy estate. William was a millionaire by 21, but he renounced his fortune, giving nearly all his wealth to missions. His heart's desire was to take the gospel to Muslims in China.

On his way to China, William stopped in Egypt to study Arabic, but four months later he contracted spinal meningitis and died at the age of 25.

Alcorn writes: I dusted off the inscription on the headstone of Borden's grave. After describing his love for Christ and his commitment to and his love for the Muslim people; and his sacrifices for God's kingdom; the inscription ended with some words I wrote down on the spot—and I have never forgotten them to this day. The inscription ended with, "Apart from faith in Christ there is no explanation for such a life."

Call

The Christian paradox, through the death of one sinless man, all men (dead in their trespasses) may have life. It can be said that followers of Christ are dead men walking. That we may triumphantly declare to live is Christ! And to die is Christ!

Matt. 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.
Jesus is Lord, is that simple a slogan?

Christ is Lord: is this your creed, your life, or simply a convenient fact/slogan?

Gospel

Apart from faith in Christ there is no explanation for such a life."

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- Philip II of Macedon seized valuable mining territory and named location after himself in 400 BCE
 - In 42 BCE site of battle between Octavian and Antony who defeated Brutus and Cassius
 - 1st city visited on 2nd missionary journey (Acts 16:12)
 - Attended prayer meeting on banks of river (Acts 16:12)
 - No synagogue (only needed 10 Jews)
 - Heavy roman and pagan character (Acts 16:21)
 - Appears to be last of Prison Epistles
 - Long period of imprisonment had elapsed
 - Abandonment by friends
 - Length of time required for journeys by friends
 - Expectation of release
 - Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to Paul with a gift (2:25-30)
 - Paul wanted to ease worries about his imprisonment (1:15-18)
 - Addressed disunity in the church (2:1-11)

Overview: Philippians is a joyful letter, but its undercurrent is a sober realization that time is running out. Paul himself was facing a possible death sentence; the church was tensed up, ready for the assault of a menacing world and for the insidious encroachment of false doctrine (Motyer).

Philippi was in fact ‘Rome in miniature.’ (Motyer). As a colony, its newly minted roman citizens enjoyed freedom from scourging and arrests and the right of ‘appeal to Caesar.’ The coins of Philippi bore Latin inscriptions (Motyer).

Thus a city with a famous past and a privileged and proud present was about to hear the good news of a status conferred not by man but by God, proclaimed by a man who had come to see all human and inherited dignities as so much rubbish in contrast with the surpassing worth of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ (Motyer).

Out of all the churches Paul founded the people of Philippi were the ones who gave him most joy (Wright, 84).

Jesus is Lord

15 times in Philippians, Paul uses the word Lord. What does this mean? In Christ, a servant of Christ, and grace and preacy from the Lord

The relationship in which the Christian lives. To be in Christ, then, is to possess what is often spoken of as full salvation: everything necessary to our past, present, future and eternal welfare has been secured for us by the action of God in Christ (Motyer, 27)

The Lord whom the Christian serves. Responsive obedience characterizes us, for the saint in Christ Jesus is necessarily also a servant of Christ Jesus (Motyer). No Christian can evade this responsibility. None can partake of grace and fight shy of service.

The Giver from whom the Christian receives. All the divine greatness of God and the Lord, all the divine love and saving efficacy of the Father and Jesus Christ come together in divine unanimity to pour out upon the saints whatever they need for their days on earth (Motyer, 29).

Phil. 1:3 I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, ⁴ always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, ⁵ because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now.

Who are the you?

Partnerships

The church was quite literally born in the place of prayer, which following the initial visit, apparently became the daily focal point of the mission (Motyer, 15).

Lydia, a wealthy, driven, intellectual was a God fearer who opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying (Acts 16:15) and she became a leader in the church.

As they were on their way in prayer, a slave girl followed and spoke “these men who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation, are the servants of the Most High God.” (Acts 16:17)

Philippian jailor, who stopped from suicide, proclaimed, “what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30)

Partnership. In Paul’s world this word was the normal vernacular for a business partnership, in which all those involved would share in doing the work on the one hand and in the financial responsibilities on the other. The Philippians, then, are partners in the gospel (v.5), partners in grace (v.7), they are in the gospel business, the grace business, along with Paul and their gift proves it (Wright, 85).

Literally the physical provision of food and money help sustain Paul during his difficult imprisonment.

Partnership

κοινωνία *koinōnia* 19x
fellowship, partnership, Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 6:14; 13:13; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 3:10; 1 Jn. 1:3; *participation, communion*, 1 Cor. 10:16; *aid, relief*, Heb. 13:16; *contribution in aid*, Rom. 15:26 → *communion; fellowship; participation; sharing*.

When you join with others in celebration the death and resurrection in the Lord's supper, you are partnering through communion in the gospel.

The proclamation of the gospel had the transforming power to create a community (koinonia) of believers in Christ (Pillar, 48).

6 I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Started. (enarchomai), means to inaugurate and the tense employed points to a decisive and deliberate act. Here was something planned and executed to perfection (Motyer, 43).

Salvation would be a wretchedly unsure thing if it had no other foundation than my having chosen Christ. The human will blows hot and cold, is firm and unstable by fits and starts; it offers no security of tenure (Motyer, 44).

God never gives up.

The assurance God gives us not only guarantees the outcome; it guarantees too every experience of every day, for in all things God is putting the finishing touches.”

The notion that the work is not yet complete shows that it involves a progressive transformation of the lives of believers (Thielman, 38).

Day of Christ Jesus

The outcome is guaranteed. God is working to a schedule, and the day of Jesus Christ is fixed in the Father's diary (Motyer, 45).

The good work that God began was the formation of a corporate entity the partnership in the gospel. Their koinonia as friends is also a koinonia as partners in the work of proclaiming the gospel (Pillar, 50).

7 Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all **partners** with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. **8** For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. Those who possess the gospel will propagate it (Motyer, 47).

⁹ And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

position conveyed by the unique word komamiyyut “in an upright position.” (JPS, 184).

Illustrations

Application

How does the Gospel change our lives?