

To You or For Me

by R.T. Nusbaum

Turn with me if you would to Philippians one. The main verse I would like to comment on this morning and I know many of you are familiar with this verse. Phi. 1:21, “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Now there are other things and verse around this I would like to address, but the first thing I would like to point out is Paul said, “For me to live is Christ ‘and’ (the conjunction) to die is gain.” So the word “and” is the conjunction that is tying together the two. In other words a conjunction is used to tie two thoughts together and makes them one. It can be a similar thought or a continuation usually “and”, referring to something added to, but still part of. So when your using the word "and" you tend to enforce the first and add to that. So “To live is Christ” that is what it enforces “and to die is gain” Phi.1:21.

Now, it is interesting that many people understand this last part, “to die is gain” like when you use of terms of heaven or in terms that Paul uses, “to depart to be with Christ” we understand that. There are very few funerals that you do not hear something talked about of what we gain when going to heaven. I would say very few Christians comprehend the reality of death and the reality of being with Christ. Now the terminology that is more commonly used is to die and go to heaven. Now Paul did not say “to die and go to heaven” but he said, “to depart and to be with Christ.”

Now most would say, “to die and go to heaven” is to get away from all of your problems and get away from this world, certainly that is true. Certainly we leave this world. Certainly we depart. Certainly death is not an end. So that is a good understanding and anyone that might be facing death, might say to you, “I am glad to die so that I may be with Jesus.”

Yet Paul did not began with that, nor was that the summation of what he saying, nor is it the context of this verse. The point that Paul was making is this part, “To live is Christ.” Let us be careful with the wording in the next part, “For to me”. “For me to live is Christ.” I have to say that most Christians do not fully comprehend that statement, because they take this verse and if you listen carefully to how its quoted, most people do this, “For me to live is Christ.” Phi.1:21 does not say that. It says, “For to me, to live is Christ.” Because, “For me to live” is me. “For me to live”...is death. I am not eternal life. Christ is eternal life. Christ is without beginning and without an end. That is eternal life. Everlasting life has a beginning and no ending, but eternal life is a person. That has no

beginning and no end. Eternal life is not a gift other than from Jesus. Eternal life is the gift of Jesus Christ himself.

So if we misunderstand this "For me to live is Christ" we are wrong. For me to live is me. It is not Christ. You can not claim that it is Christ, if you're alive. For me to live is not Christ. For me to live will never be Christ. Now again making sure that when we talk about our death with Christ, that you are a personality, you are a specific person, Gods not trying to take that away for you. You are not just a container with nothing and Jesus is supposed to live in you, like a zombie. I think that personalities are God given and God wants to live through that. There is nothing wrong with each person have there own personality and Jesus shinning though that. But I'm not talking about your personality.

I'm talking about your spirit and your nature and the way you would proceed and the life that you would live. In the life that you live, you would do so selfishly. Even if you were a good person, you would be good, because it would benefit you. That is just the way it is. That is why everyone needs Jesus, good people need Jesus. Rich people, poor people, everybody needs Jesus. He is the only life that is worth it. That is not just in the world, that is in Christianity also. Everybody in the church needs Jesus. Christianity is frankly pretty sorry without Jesus. Without Christ it is just vanity. It borders on insanity.

That sounds funny, but if anybody lives around met, they know that I met Jesus and I fell in love with Jesus and God did a wonderful thing, , I did not meet him in a person. I met Him in reality and I asked Him into my heart. He came in and I began to be changed into His image but I did not meet Him at a church or at an altar, I met Him on my own and I am not going to go into that story. I met the real Jesus but that would be the end of the story till I die and go to heaven, but the Lord has done something more than dying and going to heaven and that is the hope of the church, Christ in you. The hope of Christianity and their is no hope for Christianity. I know you may get mad at me for saying this, but there is no difference between Christianity and Muslim or anything else. If Christ is not in there it is just people going to a temple, people going and praying, people reading a book. Did you hear what I just said?

It is just people hearing a book? However, people say, " Ours are better." Ours are not any better unless Christ is the fulfillment of that. The fulfillment of all that. Its not any better, I'm telling you that their are religions that do not go slamming bombs in to people and all that, that are peaceful. People like Buddhist and Hindu are not any more peaceful then anyone in this room or in many churches around America called church buildings and that does not impress God. Buildings do not impress God. He is not jumping up and down today thinking, "I am so glad that it is Sunday!" Do you think God is glad it is Sunday? He could care less what day of the week it is. What He cares about is his Son and His plan was from the very beginning was that we, He came to give life because He is the life. I come so that you might have life. I am the way, the truth , the life. Ever tie the scriptures together and began to comprehend what He is trying to say?

"I have come that they might have life. I am the way, the truth, the life. With out me you can not go to the Father." If you have not the son, you have not eternal life, make since? Christ is the answer himself and there are Muslims and people in different religions that respect Jesus Christ, they do not respect Christians, they do not respect Christianity. Am I right or wrong? They say, " Jesus he was a peace loving man, he was a loving man, he was this and that," but you Christians.. Is that true? come on, lets be honest. If I has to....? Christian first, I would have never had become a Christian, but the truth is I did meet Christianity first, I did. I remember one time some guy was witnessing to me and we were outside a Baptist church building, a big Baptist church building and my heart started melting a little bit and I said," Wait a minute." And this guy was maybe eighteen years old and he was dressed in a full suit with a big old bible, all I remember is a big bible and I don't remember him opening it. I just remember him doing this...? And he had me cornered and I was standing outside a coffeeshouse. And I said," Wait a minute, if I accept Jesus I am I going to become like you and have to go to that building? and he said," Will you?" And I said, " forget it" and I pushed my way passed him.

Only when I met Jesus did I want to become like someone. I hope you do not want to be like me, because I'm doing everything I can not to be like me. I do not want to be like me, I want to be like Jesus. So you begin to realize that a whole lot of people are looking forward to the end of the conjunction with out fulfilling the first half of it. Then we have started the movement of a gospel that does not require Christ to be the fulfillment. It just requires Christ to have done something a long time ago and not particulally show up for a long time and then someday in the sweet by and by we will be with him but that was never Gods plan. Paul said," For to ME, to live is Christ." Now all you have to do is read the surrounding scriptures and you get that thing. Look at verse 19, " For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supplies of the spirit of Jesus Christ according to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I should be ashamed but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Notice how he said that Christ should be magnified in my body, not by my body. "Well I am going to give my body." It takes about presenting your body a living sacrifice, its more then just giving your body to be burned, for if you should do that and have not loved, which is what? The nature of God. God is love. If you do not have the nature working in the body, you got what we call a carcass. If you do not have the life in the body, it is a carcass. I look at churches today and I see the carcass of Christ. Not the body of Christ, what is the difference? The body of Christ is alive with him. The carcass of Christ is dead with him, it might be alive among programs, it might be alive among big ideas, but Christ came to fill us, to live in us, to be seen in us and if we do not have that and set up another religion that is basically run on the same perception because most of these religions talk about peace and love and practice. And practice is a verge in almost every religions. I mean we could go down the line and just talk, but do they have Gods real love? That is the difference, do they have him who is their peace and the answer is no. The difference between what were in and I am not even saying Christianity, I am saying the difference between what Paul preached and other religions is the living Christ now and we are the body of Christ and he is the life and he is continue his ministry right

now living just like he did before, except in us and Paul said," the one thing that would make me ashamed of Christ was not being manifested in my body, if to me, Christ was not living in me. The one thing that would make me ashamed not that I did not attend Church service, " Oh, I missed a church service." " God, I feel so condemned."

For to me. For to me to live. For me, first of all not for you, but to me. For to me to live has got to be Christ. It can not be Christianity. I can not settle for anything less and if its not Jesus, its me trying to be Christian and its me living in consent failure. Jesus never failed the plan of God. That gives hope to people like me. Who constantly fail. Who have nothing apart from Jesus; who are not kind, not loving, that is me. I can be that way for a while, I can put on the face, I can dress it up, I can act that way but what good is that? What good is that if I can successfully do that in every church event for my life on this plant and It never be Christ. Paul said," The one thing that would make me ashamed is that Christ not be manifested," so now as always, that Christ be manifested in my body. "That was not Christ manifested in my body. That was me doing the best I can and the cross is the thing that was meant to see to it that I would not have to do the best I can, for you are dead and you life is hind in Christ your God. " Know ye not," said Paul to those he is trying to bring in to it," That the old man is crucified.? Know you this, that Christ being raised from the dead sineth no more, there for reckon you dead also." He does not link you going to heaven or anything else except your relation with Christ. How can we go to heaven, when we ignore his son? How can we go to heaven when we reject his son? I am talking about daily attitudes who you know, excepting Christianity? Where do you find that in the bible? You accept Christ and he changes you from the inside out and you begin to be transformed and if there is not ant transformation then it is because you are believing the doctrines and denying the power thereof. Where is the power of an endless life? Remember, that is what the writer of Hebrews was asking.

The old covenant was nothing more than us keeping carnal commandments but now it is after the power of an endless life. His life is more powerful than my weaknesses. His spirit, which is love, is more powerful than my prejudices. His self giving nature is more powerful than my fears, if I gave myself what would happen? If I put my neck on the line what would happen? I can tell you right now that not a person alive does not have within ourselves a survival instinct. I think most Christians have no clue. Given the right circumstances you would be a really ugly person. Things could happen. You could be tortured or having a hard time. Something really bad could happen and you could be drugged or something. So many things could happen to you that you all the sudden discover what really matters to you the most is you and I am talking about me too. I have a little taste but enough to scare the fool out of me to really want this, to really want Christ to be my life, to fear the thought of me living. I feared it so bad that I do not to fake it.

All of the things that I have been confronted with and all the things that I have wanted, I have discovered that I do not love people. Not when it comes to me first. If there is no challenge then I can say I love you and you are special to me but then anarchy breaks out. Then we start grabbing our weapons and shooting one another or we run off and start

hiding in a corner somewhere. You say in your little mind, “ Oh, I could never do that I am a Christian.” You just do not know. But I do know one person who would not do these things and His name is Jesus. He did not come for three and a half years to give a shot at what it is supposed to look like then go away to leave us here to flounder, tell us He would be back and then wait two thousand years. He came to live in us! The hope of the whole world, the hope of me, my very personal hope, Christ in me the hope of glory.

So Paul moves into this stage where there is this struggle. I noticed there is some wording here in verse twenty-one, “ for to me” as opposed to what he says in verse twenty-four where he says “ for you” (Phil 1:21-24 KJV) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence therefore I will abide. Do you hear what he is saying? He is saying that there are two important things to him. One is to live Christ. Not to live Christianity but to literally let Christ live in him. That is so important to him. But there is another thing that is relating to, “ to me”. If you want to talk about me, to depart from here is much better. But answer me this, is to depart from here and go to heaven much better than to live Christ? Which is better, heaven or Christ? Which is better Christ in heaven who you will stand before or Christ in you who you are one with? So then what is Paul saying here? I will tell you exactly what he is saying. He is talking about his life. He is talking about his situations.

Many of his situations are totally based on the fact that he is living Christ. If you are going to let Christ live in you, the Lamb of God, remember when they saw him and said behold the Lamb of God in heaven every knee shall bow and every tongue confess every voice is lifted singing “ hosannah, glory to the Lamb” right? But the Lamb in the earth is slain and rejected. He is the same person just different locations. So, I could really enjoy being with the Lamb in heaven because everyone is shouting. “ You were with the Lamb, you were one with Him? You were one of the hundred and forty-four thousand that followed the Lamb wherever He went? You laid down your life and put the Lamb first? You were one?” This is a conversation in heaven now. “ Yes, yes I did. I am a lamb man.” But whatever happens there, there is a prelude to it, the Lamb in the earth. It is the same Lamb different reactions. In Isaiah fifty-three it says, “ He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” But why? He knew what He was getting into when He came down here. He knew what He was going to go through. I can see the Father talking to Jesus, “ Now Jesus, I have got this great plan, what we are going to do is I am going to send you down to the earth and they are going to kill you okay? But wait, it is still going to be good!”

He is the Lamb from before the foundation of the world. There is something eternal about the Lamb where the Healer was only Healer when there was sick people to make well. The Lamb was the Lamb before the earth because it is His nature. It is all summed up in this, a self-giving nature. The way the real Christ is. It is Him the way He is, Him! The essence of who He is. He can not act that way He is that way. He does not have to think

through this. But this hard for us to comprehend because when we want it to be the Lamb we have think through it and figure out what is the Lamb. Well, He does not have to figure out what is the Lamb because there is nothing else in Him besides who He is.

Do not get into condemnation because I am talking about the Lamb, not you. You are not that way and you are not going to automatically be that way. However, He can be formed in you and to me that began to be beautiful because I saw how ugly I was. I see the virtue of patients and I see the virtue of love and kindness and I see that I do that as long as I have my guard up but if I let that guard down I am liable to be very impatient. Then, when I see that enough, I realize that I am a hypocrite and a fake. I am that if I think that I am becoming something. That is the problem with Christianity. They think that they are getting better. They think that they are becoming more spiritual instead of Him increasing and us decreasing. It is about us increasing. Jesus is decreasing in that I do not need Him as much because I am becoming more spiritual. What!!?? I do not need Him as much as I used too? How can that ever be? So we think that the closer we get to heaven, or glory, we do not need Him at all! We have become so spiritual, so beautiful, and so glorious that we do not need. I am here to tell you that what is so spiritual, so beautiful, and so glorious is an increase of Him! You may find that, though you may not be as tripped up and such, is that the reason is because you have let an increase of Him come in you as you great need for Him was seen moment by moment. This is not a separation taking place. We do not grow so spiritual that we separate from Him. It is a union and growth into Him in oneness and reality of who He is and therefore who He is in us as His body, His bride. We are as one who married Him left our life took His name, left our ways took His ways, left our pursuits took His pursuits and are now the bride of Christ. As such the body of Christ and as such more than servants of the most high God. We are more than Christians trying to live on the face of this earth forgetting this part and hoping some day when I die I can get some gain out of this.

So, we are not particularly looking for Jesus in the clouds. Jesus in the clouds is a short cut to this. To is gain for most people. But even standing before the throne and Him accepting you is not greater than Him being in you and overcoming you, being you life and your hope, and your peace. That was the plan and this was first before that.

So, Paul when he is talking about himself writing to the Philippians after being in Philippi and thrown in jail, beaten and stoned. They beat Jesus did they not? Paul had it done three times. I am just trying to make a point here. They crucified Jesus right? There were thousands maybe millions crucified. I am making light of anything just trying to make a point. Peter was crucified upside down. My point is that when Christ is in Paul you are headed in the same direction but with purpose. Here is the bottom line, “ If I am going to be a Christian I am going to suffer and be persecuted.” That is what most Christians think I am talking about but I am not talking about that at all. This is the basic concept that people have but that is not it at all. We think, “ If I am with the good side then the bad side is going to be mean to me.” But that is what most people think but there is way more to it than that. That is why to live is Christ is so important to Paul and that is why he made the decision to stay because there were so few letting Christ live in them. They might feel led to give a little more money this week or something. Then you say to them,

“Wow, you were led to do that.” And they could reply, “Yes, that was Jesus. He popped out of me one day last week.”

I am not talking about some little guy in there somewhere like the ones at the fair that have those little guys that pop up and you have to shoot him or hit him whatever the case may be. I am talking Christ as your life and Him ruling there in you. You are the habitation of God through the Spirit not Him popping up from time to time. I am talking about you being His dwelling place not ours.

You can see that Paul is just consumed with this letter after letter. I love the way this is worded. “According to my earnest expectation and hope...” This is His earnest desire and hope that in nothing I would be ashamed in it being me but in all things then so also now that Christ be magnified in my body. That, that would be the only thing that gives me or he says that it be my only ground of boasting. Christ and the cross, nothing else shall I boast in. because Christ can be formed in you in this manner. It is the plan of God that Christ be formed in you in this manner. It is the plan of God that you actually become the body of Christ and that you would have a nature that is beyond human flesh and ugliness. Even human flesh when it looks proper is ugly to me, maybe not to you, but it is to me. The life of Christ stops me from just shouting stop this façade! I want something real. It is real when it is a not a religion that is telling you how to fulfil it. That is how Christianity appears to many people and I do not blame them for feeling the way they do but I tell you Christ does not appear that way and He is able to do what He said He would do and do it through us. I love the scripture that also says (Phil 2:13 KJV) “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” That just shot me down when He said “You not only can not do it but you can not even will it. You claim you are a man of God.” The Holy Spirit is not trying to put me down or make me feel bad He is just lifting up Jesus and bringing me into something higher and greater.

Paul has this earnest expectation and hope concerning himself that Christ would be magnified in his body, that when people met him they would meet the living Christ. They may not know it because when they met the living Christ many people did not even know it. The only reason some did believe then was because of signs and miracles they did not say, “Oh my, you are more kind and selfless than anyone!” You did not hear anyone say that. Some said, “This guy has a demon!” Jesus did not have a demon but that is what some people got out of that.

Jesus does not shine out of you in a way that makes everyone look in awe and tell you, “You are the Son of God. You have got Jesus.” He shines out of you to lay down your life for other so that the Father sees it. The redemptive benefit of that is that it releases more of the Lamb in the earth. It releases more light into this gross darkness. There is so much darkness. So Paul says, “Christ is my life and earnest hope and desire is that Christ will be my life and manifest out of me. Then he starts thinking about himself and says, “When I think about this I am a little confused because if it were up to me to depart and be with Jesus there would be far better than the Jesus that lives in me here.” He means when you talk about the benefit back to yourself then, “For me or to you... If it is about me then get me out of here!” But Paul is evaluating and weighing it and he says he is in a

straight between the two but in the end he very confident. He knows what he is bringing, he is bringing Christ. He knows that as being one with Christ he will lay down his life because that is the answer for other people even though they do not see it. You look at Jesus or Barabas and you think sure why not Barabas? Your mind has to think about this because here you are saying Barabas deserves to die. Barabus is a scumbag. Barabas has no redeeming qualities in him at all. Well, guess what neither do you.

God did not redeem you because there was something in you that was worthy or redeemable. He redeemed you because of His great love!

What is the point off me laying down my life for this? The world would be better off with one less Barabas. I am stating the way we think. That is not the way He thinks.