



Philippians 1:12–21

Lesson 4 — Paul's Devotion to Christ

- The epistle to the Philippians was written from Rome during Paul's first imprisonment there. More than ten years had passed since Paul had first preached the gospel at Philippi when he wrote it.
- Several years after his first visit to Philippi, on his way to Jerusalem as he completed his third missionary journey, Paul stopped again at Philippi. It was the time of the **Passover**, and the apostle kept the feast with the believers as inferred from Acts 20:6.
- Soon after his return to Jerusalem, Paul was arrested and imprisoned at Caesarea for at least two years (Acts 24:27). Then came the trip to Rome, where he spent "two whole years in his own hired house" (Acts 28:30). It was during this period of imprisonment that Paul probably wrote his epistle to the Philippian church, as well as the letters to the Colossians, the Ephesians, and to Philemon. Rome is not mentioned in the epistle to the Philippians, but Paul's reference to Caesar's household (4:22) and his expectation of a speedy release (2:24) suggest Rome as the place of writing.

Paul greatly desired to reach Jerusalem before the passover, as he would thus have an opportunity to meet the people who came from all parts of the world to attend the feast. He had a continual hope that in some way he might be instrumental in removing the prejudice of his countrymen, so that they might accept the precious light of the gospel. He was also desirous of meeting the church at Jerusalem, and bearing to them the liberalities donated by other churches to the poor brethren in Judea. And he hoped, in this visit, to bring about a firmer Christian union between the Jewish and Gentile converts to the faith. (AA 389.1)

Upon receiving warning of the plot, Paul decided to go around by way of Macedonia. His plan to reach Jerusalem in time for the Passover services had to be given up, but he hoped to be there at Pentecost. (AA 390.2)

At Philippi Paul tarried to keep the Passover. (AA 390.4)

1 Corinthians 5:7

The slaying of the Passover lamb was a shadow of the death of Christ. Says Paul: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." 1 Corinthians 5:7. The sheaf of first fruits, which at the time of the Passover was waved before the Lord, was typical of the resurrection of Christ. Paul says, in speaking of the resurrection of the Lord and of all His people: "Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." 1 Corinthians 15:23. Like the wave sheaf, which was the first ripe grain gathered before the harvest, Christ is the first fruits of that immortal harvest of redeemed ones that at the future resurrection shall be gathered into the garner of God. (*GC* 399.2)

These types were fulfilled, not only as to the event, but as to the time. On the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, the very day and month on which for fifteen long centuries the Passover lamb had been slain, Christ, having eaten the Passover with His disciples, instituted that feast which was to commemorate His own death as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” That same night He was taken by wicked hands to be crucified and slain. And as the antitype of the wave sheaf our Lord was raised from the dead on the third day, “the first fruits of them that slept,” a sample of all the resurrected just, whose “vile body” shall be changed, and “fashioned like unto His glorious body.” Verse 20; Philippians 3:21. (*GC 399.3*)

- Christ our Passover—1 Corinthians 5:7
- Lord's Supper—1 Corinthians 11:2, 23–26

The Corinthians were departing widely from the simplicity of the faith and the harmony of the church. They continued to assemble for worship, but with hearts that were estranged from one another. They had perverted the true meaning of the Lord's Supper, patterning in a great degree after idolatrous feasts. They came together to celebrate the sufferings and death of Christ, but turned the occasion into a period of feasting and selfish enjoyment. (*LP* 170.1)

It had become customary, before partaking of the communion, to unite in a social meal. Families professing the faith brought their own food to the place of meeting, and ate it without courteously waiting for the others to be ready. The holy institution of the Lord's supper was, for the wealthy, turned into a gluttonous feast; while the poor were made to blush when their meager fare was brought in contrast with the costly viands of their rich brethren. (*LP* 170.2)

Paul rebukes the Corinthians for making the house of God a place of feasting and revelry, like a company of idolaters . . .

Paul proceeded to give the order and object of the Lord's supper, and then warned his brethren against perverting this sacred ordinance . . . (*LP* 170.1, 170.2)

For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.
(Philippians 1:21)

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

- **To live is Christ**—“That is, Christ is the Author of your spiritual life. His grace is the support of that life, and Christ’s glory the great object for which you are laboring. These words possess a depth of meaning which is the mystery of godliness, better experienced than explained” (12LtMs, *Lt 61*, 1897, par. 5).
- This is the most perfect interpretation in a few words in all the Scriptures, of what it means to be a Christian. This is the whole truth of the gospel. Paul understood that which many seem unable to comprehend. How intensely in earnest he was. His words show that his mind was centered on Christ, that his whole life was bound up with his Christ. Christ was the author, the source, and the support of his life. (12LtMs, *Ms 41*, 1897, par. 13; *RH* October 19, 1897)

➤ **To live is Christ**—The one who stands nearest to Christ will be he who on earth has drunk most deeply of the spirit of His self-sacrificing love,—love that “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, ... seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil” (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5), —love that moves the disciple, as it moved our Lord, to give all, to live and labor and sacrifice, even unto death, for the saving of humanity. This spirit was made manifest in the life of Paul. He said, “For to me to live is Christ;” for his life revealed Christ to men; “and to die is gain,” —gain to Christ; death itself would make manifest the power of His grace, and gather souls to Him. “Christ shall be magnified in my body,” he said, “whether it be by life or by death.” Philippians 1:21, 20. (*DA* 549.3)

- **To live is Christ**—God will make perfect only those who will die to self. Those who are willing to do this can say, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Manuscript 16, 1900). (6BC 1109.2)
- Paul was a living example of what every true Christian should be. He lived for God’s glory. His words come sounding down the line to our time: “For to me to live is Christ.” “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” He who was once a persecutor of Christ in the person of His saints now holds up before the world the cross of Christ. Paul’s heart burned with a love for souls, and he gave all his energies for the conversion of men. There never lived a more self-denying, earnest, persevering worker. His life was Christ; he worked the works of Christ. All the blessings he received were prized as so many advantages to be used in blessing others (EGW, *The Review and Herald*, May 29, 1900). (6BC 1112.9)

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Philippians 1:21, 20. (*DA 549.3*)

The strait in which Paul is placed the candid reader will see is betwixt living and dying. If left to make a choice there, he knew not which he would choose; he wished to lie passive in the hands of Christ, and let the event come, *life* or *death*, that would tend most to *further* the gospel. But he had a desire for what? To live? No. To die? No: but “to DEPART and be with Christ.” Well, say you, that was death. No, it was something far better than living in the flesh, in a mortal body, or dying. If he continued in the flesh, “bonds and afflictions” were his portion. If he died, (“the dead know not anything.”) he would not be in a condition to receive a reward, but would only rest in hope; but there was something he did desire, that was worth obtaining, “to *depart* and be with Christ,” not by death but bodily. (J. N.

Loughborough, *An Examination of the Scripture Testimony Concerning Man's Present Condition and His Future Reward or Punishment*, p. 91.1)

If you claim that the strait in which Paul is placed, is betwixt living here in the flesh and departing and being with Christ, then you make him contradict himself; for he says of those two betwixt which he is in a strait, “which I shall choose, I wot not,” but he did “desire to *depart* and be with Christ. . . . Here is his strait, whether to live here and preach the gospel, or to die a martyr and *thus* further the gospel. Which he should choose he did not know, but he had a desire for something better than either, *to depart and be with Christ*. By death? No: he desired something better— TRANSLATION, and a change to immortality. He had the history, though brief, of good old *Enoch*, who “walked with God 300 years and was not, for God took him.” And of *Elijah* who “was carried up by a whirlwind into heaven.” He desired to be a partaker of this blessing and their joys, “to *depart* and be with Christ.” Paul did not desire to *die*, or to be *unclothed*, [2 Corinthians 5:4,] but he desired to become immortal. We may learn definitely in regard Paul’s desire, by reading 2 Corinthians 5:1–10. (Ibid., p. 91.2)

- 1 Corinthians 15:51—sleep
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13—sleep