

*And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

**Philippians 2:8**

## Store In My Heart

### Ephesians 3:6

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Paul's message in the verse above is unity in Christ. Though he spent several years working with the brethren in and around Ephesus, there were still many who would not fully accept this unity. A major difficulty in the early church was understanding that all were saved in the same manner, no matter their heritage. None were saved by their own actions. All were saved by grace through faithful submission to Christ.

But Paul does not stop there. He continues in the latter half to encourage faithfulness, giving practical examples of their submission to one another in Christ. His final instruction is to stand firm together in the Word of God.



# To Live Is Christ; To Die Is Gain

**Matthew Bassford**

Among its other effects, a terminal diagnosis will lead you to read the Scriptures with very different eyes. All sorts of passages that you thought you understood take on new depth and meaning. For me, the chief of these is **Philippians 1:21-24**.

Years ago, I read this passage as Paul being Paul. He was a good man and loved the Philippians, so he wanted to continue living in order to help them. That's true, but it's vastly incomplete because it doesn't really reckon with either half of **Philippians 1:21**.

Let's start with the back half. When Paul describes death as gain, he isn't guessing. According to **2Corinthians 12:2-4**, he was caught up into the third heaven and heard inexpressible things that no human can repeat. The unimaginable joys of eternal life were no mystery to him.

Against that gain, though, he balances life in the likeness of Christ. Serving the Philippians is as precious to him as his heavenly reward. This might seem incredible to us, but I think it's where most genuine disciples would end up if they were placed in Paul's position.

I'm not eager to die. I don't look forward to the process of dying, which is likely to be very unpleasant. I don't relish

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We want opportunities to speak with others about the Lord's Kingdom.

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## For Our Information

Joyce Venable is doing better but mostly sleeping.

Adene Gray is sick.

David Laubach has covid and Paula is isolating.

John Jackson is isolating due to Jordan and Addison having covid.

The Keislars are out of town still. Dan & JoBeth will be in Alabama this week.

Tonight we start in 2Samuel 11.

Wednesday's study will be in Hebrews 7.

Come study with us.

Pray for safety, courage & healing.

giving up my abilities one by one. I already miss hunting and hiking, and I'm sure I'll miss being able to walk when I lose that. However, against those things, I can set my hope of that which is far better. From a selfish perspective, heaven wins every time!

Instead, the losses that I mourn the most are of my opportunities to serve others. I bitterly regret that I probably won't be able to finish raising my children. I grieve that I won't be able to give my wife a lifetime of being happily married. I mourn that I will have to step away from the pulpit and the keyboard and won't be able to help others on to heaven. Once I die, I will be done with all of those things.

I think that's what Paul is talking about when he says, *"To live is Christ."* Christ was a servant who actually LEFT HEAVEN so He could come to earth and help us! The essence of following Him is living with self-sacrificing love. Paul prized the opportunity to do that so highly—an opportunity that would last only as long as his life did--that he was willing to postpone his reward for the sake of others.

The Christian's bucket list, then, doesn't consist of travel and skydiving. There's nothing wrong with them, of course, but they are of no lasting value. Instead, the truly valuable things in life are the times when we can put a family member or a friend ahead of ourselves, take on that Bible class at church that nobody else wants to teach, or gather our courage and invite an outsider to worship with us. Those, not our possessions or abilities, are our true gifts. As Paul found, they are the only things in this life that are worthy to be compared to the joys of heaven.

(I found this to be an interesting addition to the teaching I have heard, and given, regarding this passage. It reminds us that Paul was not just telling others how to find Christ and follow His Words, but also telling and showing them how to be like Christ. This fits well with his admonition to have the mind of Christ. The goal for every Christian while here on Earth should be to keep growing more and more like Christ. The image of Christ in Scripture is certainly an image of a servant. If we expect to be like Him, serving our fellow man is going to be a large part of our work. DLH)



We seek only to serve God according to His Will!