

Philippians Illustrations 1

PHILIPPIANS ILLUSTRATIONS

OUR DAILY BREAD, F B MEYER, SPURGEON

Philippians Illustrations 1

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PHILIPPIANS 1

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-5

Five-Finger Prayers

Read: James 5:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

Pray for one another. --James 5:16

Prayer is a conversation with God, not a formula. Yet sometimes we might need to use a "method" to freshen up our prayer time. We can pray the Psalms or other Scriptures (such as The Lord's Prayer), or use the ACTS method (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). I recently came across this "Five-Finger Prayer" to use as a guide when praying for others:

- * When you fold your hands, the thumb is nearest you. So begin by praying for those closest to you--your loved ones (Philippians 1:3, 4, 5-note).
- * The index finger is the pointer. Pray for those who teach--Bible teachers and preachers, and those who teach children (1 Thessalonians 5:25-note).
- * The next finger is the tallest. It reminds you to pray for those in authority over you--national and local leaders, and your supervisor at work (1 Timothy 2:1, 2).
- * The fourth finger is usually the weakest. Pray for those who are in trouble or who are suffering (James 5:13, 14, 15, 16).
- * Then comes your little finger. It reminds you of your smallness in relation to God's greatness. Ask Him to supply your needs (Philippians 4:6-note, Php 4:19-note).

Whatever method you use, just talk with your Father. He wants to hear what's on your heart. --Anne Cetas

Our prayers ascend to heaven's throne

Regardless of the form we use;

Our Father always hears His own

Regardless of the words we choose. --D. De Haan

It's not the words we pray that matter,

it's the condition of our heart.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

As Hitler was mounting his attack against England during World War II, Winston Churchill was asked to speak to a group of discouraged Londoners. He uttered an eight-word encouragement:

"Never give up! Never, never, never give up!"

There will be times when you'll be discouraged in your Christian walk, but you must never, never, never give up. If nothing else, your struggle against sin will cause you to turn to God again and again and cling to Him in your desperation.

What's required is dogged endurance, keeping at the task of obedience through the ebbs and flows, ups and downs, victories and losses in life. It is trying again, while knowing that God is working in you to accomplish His purposes (Phil. 1:6-note; Php 2:13-note). It is persistently pursuing God's will for your life till you stand before Him and your work is done. —D. H. Roper

PERSEVERANCE CAN TIP THE SCALES FROM FAILURE TO SUCCESS

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

"JOY STEALERS"

READ: Philippians 1:1-11

He who has begun a good work in you will complete it. —Php 1:6

Why do many Christians fail to experience real joy, which is listed as a fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22note?

In his book *Laugh Again*, Charles Swindoll suggests three common "joy stealers"—worry, stress, and fear. He defines worry as "an inordinate anxiety about something that may or may not occur." (And it usually doesn't.) Stress, says the author, is "intense strain over a situation we can't change or control." (But God can.) And fear, according to Swindoll, is a "dreadful uneasiness over danger, evil, or pain." (And it magnifies our problems.)

Swindoll says that to resist these "joy stealers" we must embrace the same confidence that Paul expressed in his letter to the Philippians. After giving thanks for the Philippian believers (Php 1:3, 4, 5), the apostle assured them "that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Php 1:6).

Whatever causes you worry, stress, and fear cannot ultimately keep God from continuing His work in you. With this confidence we can begin each day knowing that He is in control. We can leave everything in His hands.

Resist those "joy stealers" by renewing your confidence in God each morning. Then relax and rejoice. —Joanie Yoder

Although our joy will wane at times
From worry, stress, and fear,
God keeps on working in our heart
And tells us He is near. —D. De Haan

**Happiness depends on happenings;
joy depends on Jesus.**

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Occasionally when I walk along the beach in Florida, I see the remains of partially built sand castles. Apparently the sculptors got distracted or bored and left their castles unfinished. There is something sad about these ruins. Like the unfinished painting, the half-built house, or the incomplete manuscript, they are a haunting reminder of our human tendency to leave things undone.

In his book *Intercepted Letters*, William Marshall wrote: "It is a great trial to one who is naturally fond of bringing a thing to completion, to see how many fragments—unfinished bits of life—are left over. He asks himself, 'What do I have to show for my labor?' Our trust must be that God will take up what is incomplete and wrap around it His completeness. 'He cannot fail.'"

What a difference between man and God! The Creator always finishes what He has started. All of His masterpieces, planned in eternity past and begun in time, will be brought to fulfillment in eternity future. That's when each believer will be completely conformed to His image.

As we struggle now to be more Christlike, we can be confident that one day we will reach that goal. God is molding us into trophies of grace, fashioned like His Son. He leaves nothing undone. —P. R. Van Gorder

**The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment;
the growth of a saint is the work of a lifetime.**

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Every workman takes pride in a project completed and well-done. I thought of this recently when I visited the site of a new house

my friend was building. The foundation had been laid, the walls erected, and the wiring and plumbing installed, but the structure still wasn't a house. It needed the finishers. Without the woodworkers, the cabinetmakers, the carpet layers, and the painters, the building was incomplete.

We as Christians need a "finisher" too. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, which began at conversion, must continue until the One who began the transformation finishes it. And that can happen only by trusting and obeying Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith," the One to whom we are being conformed.

God is not the architect of incompleteness. The Bible says, "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). Our part is to stay in fellowship with Him. He'll do the rest. —P R Van Gorder

KEEP IN STEP WITH GOD; HE HAS PLANNED EVERY STEP OF THE WAY.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

Raku

READ: James 1:2, 3, 4

Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation. —Ro 12:12-note

Some friends gave us a piece of Raku pottery. "Each pot is hand-formed," the tag explained, "a process that allows the spirit of the artist to speak through the finished work with particular directness and intimacy."

Once the clay has been shaped by the potter it is fired in a kiln. Then, glowing red hot, it is thrust into a smoldering sawdust pile where it remains until finished. The result is a unique product—"one of a kind," the tag on our piece insists.

So it is with us. We bear the imprint of the Potter's hand. He too has spoken through His work "with particular directness and intimacy." Each of us is formed in a unique way for a unique work: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10-note).

But though we are created for good works, we're not yet finished. We must experience the kiln of affliction. Aching hearts, weary spirits, aging bodies are the processes God uses to finish the work He has begun.

Don't fear the furnace that surrounds you. Be "patient in tribulation" and await the finished product. "Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:4-note).—David H. Roper

We are here to be perfected,
Only God our needs can see;
Rarest gems bear hardest grinding,
God's own workmanship are we. —Anon.

**He who has begun a good work in you
will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. —Philippians 1:6**

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

End Of Construction

One day Billy and Ruth Graham were driving through a long stretch of road construction. They had numerous slowdowns, detours, and stops along the way. Finally they reached the end of all that difficulty, and smooth pavement stretched out before them. This sign caught Ruth's attention: "End of construction. Thanks for your patience." She commented that those words would be a fitting inscription on her tombstone someday. As a matter of fact, those words fit all of us as believers, because in this life we are "**under construction.**" When we accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we begin the lifelong process of spiritual growth. The Holy Spirit works in us to remove our selfishness (Php 2:4-note), to renew our thinking (Ro 12:2-note), and to develop qualities in us that are more and more Christ-like (Col 3:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 -see notes on Colossians 3:5ff). Paul described this process as a work of God. He said, "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). As we travel heavenward, let's cooperate with God's construction of our lives. When His work in us is complete, "we shall be like Him" (1John 3:2), perfectly conformed to our Savior's likeness. —V C Grounds

More about Jesus let me learn,

More of His holy will discern;

Spirit of God, my teacher be,

Showing the things of Christ to me. —Hewitt

God loves us too much to let us stay as we are. You might say believers in this present life are always...

PHILIPPIANS 1:8-18

The things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel (Philippians 1:12)

A young pitcher who entered the major leagues had such a blazing fastball that he didn't think he needed to work on his control, his changeup, or his curve. Consequently, he failed to make the grade and was sent back to the minor leagues. Though disappointed, he worked on these pitches, and in time became a superstar.

Winston Churchill failed twice to win an elected office during the early 1920s and had little political influence all through the 1930s. But he kept developing his talents, and in 1940 he became the Prime Minister of England. Today he is acclaimed as a great hero.

The apostle Paul planned to go to Rome to preach the gospel as a free man, but he was taken there as a prisoner instead. It looked as if he had failed to achieve his noble ambition. In his place of confinement, however, he witnessed to the guards with such persuasion that most of them were converted, and from his prison he wrote some of his outstanding epistles. That's why he could write to the Christians in Philippi that everything had turned out for the advancement of the gospel.

When our carefully laid plans fizzle, it's time to analyze our failure and take appropriate action. If we discover that we blundered, we can correct our mistakes. If we trace our seeming lack of success to circumstances beyond our control, we can ask God to teach us what He wants us to learn and trust Him to bring good out of our disappointments. A failure then becomes a steppingstone to success. —H V Lugt

Most successes follow many failures.

PHILIPPIANS 1:9

It is said that one day Michelangelo entered his studio to examine the work of his students. As he came to the painting of one of his favorite pupils, he stood and looked at it for a long time. Then, to the utter surprise of the class, he suddenly took a brush and wrote one word across the canvas.

That one word he splashed on the picture was *amplius*, meaning "larger." Michelangelo was not rejecting the work, for it exhibited great skill and was good as far as it went. But the small size of the canvas had made its design appear cramped. It needed to be expanded.

The Lord may have to write the word *amplius* across many

of our lives. Our spiritual outlook becomes confined, and our vision of what God wants to do in and through us gets restricted by our small faith and limited spiritual growth. He wants to increase the dimensions of our spiritual lives, widen our outreach, and strengthen our witness. —P. R. Van Gorder

OUR LIMITED VISION NEEDS CONTINUAL REVISION

PHILIPPIANS 1:12

The Ring

READ: Philippians 1:12-17

The things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. —Php 1:12

I'm not much for jewelry. A wedding ring was all I ever wanted —until now. Next to my wedding ring, on the little finger of my left hand, rests a simple silver band. It's my daughter Melissa's.

Soon after Mell died in a car accident in June 2002, just 6 weeks short of her 18th birthday, I was in her bedroom when I found the ring. I recalled having seen it on her beautiful hand.

I slipped it on and was surprised that it fit. Now I wear it all the time. Here's why: I can look at it or touch it and feel close to my precious daughter. Knowing that it graced her finger warms my heart when I miss her the most.

But there's another reason I wear her ring. I want people to notice it and ask me about it. Then I can tell them of Melissa and her life of love, faith, and fun. I hope it opens conversations that will allow me to introduce people to Melissa's Savior, and mine.

The apostle Paul used his chains—his imprisonment—to advance the gospel (Philippians 1:12). It wasn't that he enjoyed being incarcerated, but he knew it could be turned to good purposes. It's like the ring. I wish it wasn't mine; I wish Melissa was still enjoying it. But she's not, and I want this tragic circumstance to bring glory to God.

Is there a loss in your life that God can use? —Dave Branon

Our God works to transform us
Till life on earth is done;
He uses trials and testings
To make us like His Son. —Sper

God can transform a tragedy into a triumph

PHILIPPIANS 1:15

Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife (Philippians 1:15).

When the famous sculptor Michelangelo and the painter Raphael were creating works of art to beautify the Vatican, a bitter spirit of rivalry rose up between them. Whenever they met, they refused to speak to each other. Yet each was supposedly doing his work for the glory of God.

Jealousy often parades behind the facade of religious zeal. Miriam and Aaron criticized their brother Moses for marrying an Ethiopian. But God's anger revealed that it was actually jealousy that prompted their criticism. Out of jealousy, Saul sought to kill David, whom God had chosen to succeed Saul as king. And when the apostle Paul was in prison, some people were so jealous of the way God was using him that they preached Christ in order to add to the apostle's distress.

We can overcome this harmful attitude, but first we must identify it. Jealousy believes that someone else is getting what we deserve—whether money, popularity, wisdom, skill, or spiritual maturity. Second, we must confess it. Call it what it is—sin. And third, we must give thanks. The moment we see someone enjoying any advantage, we must accept it with gratitude. We can keep jealousy in check by refusing to compare ourselves with others.

As we learn to find our satisfaction in God, His grace enables us to rejoice with those who rejoice. When we do that, we have little room for envy. —D J De Haan

When we turn green with jealousy, we are ripe for trouble.

PHILIPPIANS 1:18

CHURCH COMPETITION

Three churches, located on different corners of the same intersection, didn't get along together. One Sunday each of them opened their meeting with a rousing song service. It was a warm day and all the doors and windows were wide open. One congregation began singing the old hymn, "Will There Be Any Stars in My Crown?" The strains had barely faded away when the congregation across the street started singing, "No, Not One, No, Not One!" They had scarcely finished when the third church began singing, "Oh, That Will Be Glory for Me."

Of course, this is just a humorous story, but it reminds us that a spirit of divisive competition does exist among some churches. Naturally, we will want to support our own church, pray for it, and rejoice in its growth. But we must never feel self-satisfied or be critical of churches that have problems or are not growing.

If there is a place for "competition", let it be to oppose those who deny scriptural fundamentals and the gospel. But if a church is true to God's Word and is winning people to Christ, regardless of its label, let's rejoice. That should be our attitude when faced with the competitive motives of envy and strife. Let's avoid church competition.- Richard W. De Haan

Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ the head and cornerstone;
Chosen of the Lord and precious,
Binding all the church in one. --Neale

The fruit of Christian unity grows out of our union with Christ.

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

Eager For Heaven

READ: PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. —Revelation 21:21 [note](#)

My neighbor Jasmine, age 9, was sitting on the front porch with me one summer evening. Out of the blue she started talking about her bad choices and how she needed God's forgiveness. We talked and prayed together and she asked Jesus to be her Savior.

Questions about heaven started pouring out of her: "Are the streets really gold? Will my mom be there? What if she isn't? Will I have a bed, or will I sleep on a cloud? What will I eat?" I assured her that heaven would be a perfect home, and that she would be with Jesus, who would give her everything she needed. She replied with excitement, "Well, then let's go right now!"

The apostle Paul had a heavenly perspective too (Philippians 1:23). His testimony was, "To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Php 1:21). He knew that this life was about knowing, trusting, and serving God. But he also knew that life in heaven would be "far better" because he would "be with Christ" (Php 1:23). He wanted to stay here so that he could minister to the Philippians and others, but he was ready to go to heaven at any time to see Jesus.

Jasmine is ready to go now. Are we as eager for heaven as she is? —Anne Cetas

No matter what we learn of God
And of the fullness of His grace,
The picture will not be complete
Until we meet Him face-to-face. —Branon

**Those who have their hearts fixed on heaven
will hold loosely the things of earth.**

PHILIPPIANS 1:20

"I'm A Present!"

Read: Romans 6:1-14

Present yourselves to God ... as instruments of righteousness. --Romans 6:13-note

A few days before Christmas, the 3-year-old daughter of Pastor Jeff Callender was caught up in the excitement of gifts and giving. He writes, "One morning she was picking up, examining, shaking, and guessing what was inside every package. Then, in a burst of inspiration, she picked up a big red bow that had fallen off one present and held it on the top of her head. She looked up at me with twinkling eyes and beamed a smile as she said, 'Look at me, Daddy! I'm a present!'"

Every child of God should say that to the heavenly Father. In view of all He has done for us, we are to offer ourselves to Him freely, including our bodies. Doing that, we will "put to death the deeds of the body" (Ro 8:13-note). And we will present ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice (Ro. 12:1-note). Those who truly surrender their all to the Lord can say with Paul, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20-note).

Christmas is the time when we commemorate God's greatest gift to mankind--His Son Jesus Christ. As we contemplate the love that prompted such giving, may our response be one of yielding our lives to Him for His glory.

Let's echo the words of that little girl, "Look at me, Father! I'm a present!" --R W De Haan

What shall I give to Christ today,
To Him who gave Himself for me?
I'll give to Him my life, my love--
For time and for eternity. --Anon.

To make something of your life, give your life to God

PHILIPPIANS 1:20

Magnifying Our Master

READ: 2 Corinthians 11:23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28

I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. —2Timothy 4:6note

As a man of unwavering steadfastness, the apostle Paul had a fixed ambition. He spelled it out in his letter to the Philippians: "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Php 1:20).

No matter what Paul might be called upon to suffer, no matter what hardships he might undergo, he was determined that his life would be a means of magnifying Jesus. And without flinching, he held tight to that determination through peril, pain, and imprisonment, and even willingly offered his body as a sacrifice.

Some of us may not be able to see how Jesus could be magnified in our bodies. We may think that it can be done only during times of persecution for our faith. But that is not the case.

Our hands can magnify the Lord as we write letters of encouragement. Our feet can magnify Him as we go on simple errands of helpfulness. Our voices can magnify Him as we give our testimony and sing His praises. Our hearts can magnify Him as we express in prayer our love for the redeeming Christ. Our ears can magnify Him as we gratefully listen to sermons exalting His grace.

If we know Jesus, we can lift Him up to others in our daily lives. —Vernon C Grounds

Take my will and make it Thine-
It shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart-it is Thine own,
It shall be Thy royal throne. -Havergal

You are one of a kind-designed to glorify God as only you can.

PHILIPPIANS 1:20

Worse Than Dying

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:11-23

It would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. —1Corinthians 9:15

The apostle Paul said he would rather die than give the impression that he was serving the Lord for money. That's why he supported himself while preaching in Corinth. To him, anything that marred his testimony for Christ was worse than dying.

Down through the centuries, many have held that same conviction and have proven it by dying as martyrs rather than denying their Lord. Most of us will not face a "deny Christ or die" ultimatum. But our lifestyle must reflect that we believe some things are worse than dying.

On New Year's Eve 1951, I was deeply impressed as I read Paul's declaration in Philippians 1:20. He said that his supreme expectation was that he would be ashamed "in nothing." His only hope was not that he be released from prison but that Christ would be magnified in his body, "whether by life or by death." I was also struck by his confident statement in verse 21, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Since that evening, I've told the Lord many times that I would rather die than do anything to dishonor His name, break the hearts of my wife and family, or disappoint those who respect me.

Yes, some things are worse than dying, and dishonoring Christ is one of them. —H V Lugt

I'd rather die than bring disgrace
Upon my Lord, His name debase;
So I will live my life each day
To honor Christ and walk His way. —Hess

To keep your testimony alive, you must die to sin.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

WHAT KEEPS US GOING?

READ: Philippians 3:1-11

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. —Philippians 1:21

Isaac Asimov tells the story of a rough ocean crossing during which a Mr. Jones became terribly seasick. At an especially rough time, a kindly steward patted Jones on the shoulder and said, "I know, sir, that it seems awful. But remember, no man ever died of sea-sickness." Mr. Jones lifted his green countenance to the steward's concerned face and replied, "Man, don't say that! It's only the wonderful hope of dying that keeps me alive."

There's more in Jones' words than a touch of irony. I hear echoes of Paul's words to the Philippians. He said that the wonderful hope of dying kept him going (Php 1:21). Yet he wasn't merely looking for relief from his suffering. Paul's hope was rooted in Christ, who died on the cross for sinners, who rose from the grave that first Easter morn, who was alive in heaven, and who would one day take Paul into His presence.

But how did the hope of seeing Christ, either at death or when He returned, keep Paul going? It gave meaning to every moment. It gave him reason to live in behalf of Christ. It gave him incentive to focus on others who needed his encouragement. Paul had come to know Christ as his very life.

Father, thank You for the risen Christ—our reason for living. —Mart De Haan

A wonderful joy is now flooding my heart,
Giving assurance that will not depart.
My Savior is living and reigning above;
Life has rich meaning because of His love. —Bosch

Those who are prepared to die are most prepared to live.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

SPURGEON - MORNING AND EVENING

The believer did not always live to Christ. He began to do so when God the Holy Spirit convinced him of sin, and when by grace he was brought to see the dying Saviour making a propitiation for his guilt. From the moment of the new and celestial birth the man begins to live to Christ. Jesus is to believers the one pearl of great price, for whom we are willing to part with all that we have. He has so completely won our love, that it beats alone for him; to his glory we would live, and in defence of his gospel we would die; he is the pattern of our life, and the model after which we would sculpture our character. Paul's words mean more than most men think; they imply that the aim and end of his life was Christ—nay, his life itself was Jesus. In the words of an ancient saint, he did eat, and drink, and sleep eternal life. Jesus was his very breath, the soul of his soul, the heart of his heart, the life of his life. Can you say, as a professing Christian, that you live up to this idea? Can you honestly say that for you to live is Christ? Your business—are you doing it for Christ? Is it not done for self-aggrandizement and for family advantage? Do you ask, "Is that a mean reason?" For the Christian it is. He professes to live for Christ; how can he live for another object without committing a spiritual adultery? Many there are who carry out this principle in some measure; but who is there that dare say that he hath lived wholly for Christ as the apostle did? Yet, this alone is the true life of a Christian—its source, its sustenance, its fashion, its end, all gathered up in one word—Christ Jesus. Lord, accept me; I here present myself, praying to live only in thee and to thee. Let me be as the bullock which stands between the plough and the altar, to work or to be sacrificed; and let my motto be, "Ready for either."

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk

LIFE AND DEATH

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."-- Phil 1:21.

HOW CLOSE life and death are! In this verse there is only a comma between them, and every one of us stands where that comma stands, between life and death. Life is the vestibule of death, and death is close on the heels of life. The systole and diastole; the throb and beat of the pulse; the swing of the pendulum this way or that!

St. Paul is enamoured with the joys of life. He was a toiler and a traveller, and lived amid the busy throng that jostled him in the streets. The Philosopher, as he passed, carrying his scrolls of learning, said: "To me to live is knowledge"; the soldier, passing, looked with contempt on the man of letters, and said: "To me to live is fame"; the merchant in passing, said, with pride: "To me to live is riches"; the toiling masses passed by, saying: "To us to live is toil and trouble." Amid all these, the Apostle strikes in with no bated breath, saying joyously: "To me to live is neither wealth, nor labour, nor fame, nor glory, but Christ." If you had asked him just what he meant, he would probably have replied, as Tyndale brings out in his translation, that "Christ was the origin of his life."

If we would become partakers of the Divine Nature, we also must have such a definite experience. We can trace our natural life

back to our parents, and our spiritual life must begin in the hour when, in early childhood, or later, we are made partakers of the Nature of the Risen Saviour (John 1:12-13; 2Pe 1:4-note).

Christ must be the model of our life. Every man works to a model. Consciously or not, we are always imitating somebody, and every true follower of Christ seeks to approximate to the measuring of the stature of our Lord--"Beholding, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

Christ must be the aim of life. That His will may be done on earth as in heaven; that others may know and love and serve Him as we do; that He may be the crowned King of men--that must be our purpose and aim. External things have no power over the one who can say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"; then we can triumph over Death itself, and say: "To die is gain."

PRAYER -The mountain peaks of the Christ-life that we would live call to us, but they often seem too steep and high for us to reach, but Thou knowest and hast an infinite compassion for Thy children. Fulfil in us the good pleasure of Thy will, and realise in us the ideals Thou hast taught us to cherish. AMEN.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

A Ruling Passion

Read: Philippians 3:7-14

Vladimir Lenin was the fanatical architect of the former USSR. A colleague once said of him, "Lenin thinks about nothing but revolution. He talks about nothing but revolution. He eats and drinks revolution. And if he dreams at night, he must dream about revolution."

No matter how much we deplore Lenin's fanaticism and all the evil that came from it, we must recognize that his single-minded passion not only helped him accomplish his goals but affected the entire course of history.

What is our ruling passion? Is there some cause, some sport, some hobby, some project that fills us with enthusiasm, focuses our energies, and commands the untiring investment of our time and thought and money? In light of what God says has eternal significance, what value does our passion really possess?

The apostle Paul expressed a worthy goal when he wrote, "None of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

To know Jesus Christ, to trust Him, to love Him, and to serve Him--that is a passion with eternal value. --V C Grounds

Living for Jesus who died in my place,
Bearing on Calv'ry my sin and disgrace;
Such love constrains me to answer His call,
Follow His leading, and give Him my all. --Chisholm

Without a heart aflame for God, we cannot shine for Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

Building A Life

READ: John 20:11-18

To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. —Php 1:21

It was a sunny, sad day in 1982—the day after my husband's funeral. I had gone alone to Bill's grave, hardly knowing why. As with Mary Magdalene who visited Jesus' tomb, the risen Lord was waiting for me. He impressed the words of Philippians 1:21 on my mind, still numbed by Bill's untimely death from cancer.

I wove my prayer around the words of that verse: "Lord, how often I've heard Bill testify, 'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Well, your servant has now died, an untold loss for us, an unspeakable gain for him. I know, Lord, that I too will die someday and enter that gain. But right now I'm still alive. I know I must not live in the past, precious as it is. For to me, to live is You!"

As I turned to leave, I knew I had prayed a foundational prayer. Much recovery and rebuilding lay before me, but beneath me was the only firm foundation on which to build—Jesus Christ.

Has a loved one's death or the fear of your own death tested your foundation? Let Paul's words, written in the face of death, and Jesus' words to Mary encourage you to offer a foundational prayer of your own. Then begin to rebuild your life on the risen Christ!—
Joanie Yoder

It matters not how dark the way,
How thick the clouds from day to day,
God will direct in all we do
If we take time to pray it through. —Mead

Life's best outlook is a prayerful uplook

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

Foundational Praying

Read: John 20:11-18

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. --Philippians 1:21

It was a sunny, sad day in 1982--the day after my husband's funeral. I had gone alone to Bill's grave, hardly knowing why. As with Mary Magdalene who visited Jesus' tomb, the risen Lord was waiting for me. He impressed the words of Philippians 1:21 on my vacant mind, still numbed by Bill's untimely cancer death. I wove my prayer around the words of that verse:

"Lord, how often I've heard Bill testify, 'For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' Well, your servant has now died, an untold loss for us, an unspeakable gain for him. I know, Lord, that I too will die someday and enter that gain. But right now I'm still alive. I know I must not live in the past, precious as it is. For me, to live is You!"

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How thick the clouds from day to day,
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If we take time to pray it through. --Mead

Prayer is the soil in which
hope and healing grow best.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21,23

Pulled In Two Directions

Read: Philippians 1:19-26

To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain... I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ. --
Philippians 1:21,23

As Christians, we are pulled in two directions. We all want to go to heaven, but this life also holds great appeal. We are like the youngster in Sunday school who listened intently while the teacher told about the beauties of heaven. She concluded by saying, "Raise your hand if you want to go to heaven." Every hand shot up immediately--except one. "Why don't you want to go to heaven, Johnny?" "Well," he replied, "Mom just baked an apple pie for dinner."

Now, we don't need to feel guilty for having a strong desire to enjoy life. Marriage, a family, a fulfilling job, travel, recreation--these all have a legitimate appeal. But if the delights of our earthly home are so attractive that we lose sight of God's purpose for putting us here, something's wrong.

The apostle Paul had mixed feelings too. Although he believed he would be released from prison, he knew that he could possibly fall victim to Nero's sword. This created a conflict. He longed to be with Christ, for that would be "far better" (Phil. 1:23). He also wanted to live--not merely to enjoy life but because he was needed by his fellow believers (v.24).

Paul was pulled in two directions, and in both cases it was for the highest reason. What about us? --DJD

Tempt not my soul away--Jesus is mine;
Here would I ever stay--Jesus is mine.
Perishing things of clay, born but for one brief day,
Pass from my heart away--Jesus is mine. --J. Bonar

**To make the most of your time on earth,
always keep heaven in mind.**

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

"JOY IN LIVING AND VICTORY IN DYING"

Having lost his beloved wife of many years, a 96-year-old man shared the deep longing of his heart with a retired pastor as he said, "There's nothing I want more than to be with my wife again."

The minister replied, "I can understand that, but if she has gone to heaven and you don't profess to be a Christian, what hope do you have of being with her when you die?"

After thinking for a few moments, the man blurted out the sad confession, "You're right - the thought of leaving this life terrifies me. I'm sick of living but afraid of dying."

What a sharp contrast to Paul's outlook. The apostle was willing to live or to die. He desired to be with Christ in heaven but would gladly remain on earth to continue his ministry (Phil. 1:21).

You may not be as desperate as that 96-year-old man. Life may be enjoyable for you, but are you prepared to face eternity? If so, you can say with the psalmist, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me" (Ps. 23:4).

If not, receive the gift of eternal life that God offers today. By trusting Christ as your personal Savior, you will find joy in living and victory in dying! -- Richard W. DeHaan

"To live is Christ, to die is gain,"
Let not this motto be in vain;
For though we stay or pass death's vale,
God's grace and peace will never fail! -- Henry G. Bosch

We are not ready to live until we are ready to die.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

A New Location

READ: Philippians 1:12-26

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. —Php 1:21

A bank in Binghamton, New York, had some flowers sent to a competitor who had recently moved into a new building. There was a mixup at the flower shop, and the card sent with the arrangement read, "With our deepest sympathy."

The florist, who was greatly embarrassed, apologized. But he was even more embarrassed when he realized that the card intended for the bank was attached to a floral arrangement sent to a funeral home in honor of a deceased person. That card read, "Congratulations on your new location!"

A sentiment like that is appropriate for Christians, because they move to a wonderful new location when they die. They go to be with Christ, and the sorrows and heartaches of this earthly existence are gone forever. Near the end of his life, Paul said that to be with Christ is "far better" than to remain on earth (Philippians 1:23).

Yes, separation is painful, but as Christians we do not grieve as those who have no hope. Rather, we can rejoice, even with tear-filled eyes, because our loved ones have taken up a new residence in heaven.

Whenever believers in Christ die, it would be appropriate for us to say to them (if we could), "Congratulations on your new location!"
—Richard De Haan

Someday my earthly house will fall—
I cannot tell how soon 'twill be;
But this I know—my All in All
Has now a place in heaven for me. —Crosby

Don't drive your stakes too deep—we're moving in the morning.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

A Winner Either Way

READ: Philippians 1:15-26

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. —Philippians 1:21

Lois had just undergone cancer surgery and was alone with her thoughts. She had faced death before, but it had always been the death of people she had loved—not her own.

Suddenly she realized that losing someone she loved was more threatening to her than the possibility of losing her own life. She wondered why. She remembered that she had asked herself before her operation, "Am I ready to die?" Her immediate answer had been, and still was, "Yes, I am. Christ is my Lord and Savior."

With her readiness for death assured, she now needed to concentrate on living. Would it be in fear or in faith? Then God seemed to say, "I have saved you from eternal death. I want to save you from living in fear." Isaiah 43:1 came to mind: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

Now Lois testifies, "Yes, I am His! That reality is more important than doctors telling me I have cancer." And then she adds, "I win either way!"

Lois' insight is a convinced echo of Paul's words in today's text, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Let's pray that those words will resonate in our heart. That confidence makes us a winner either way. —Joanie Yoder

Safe in the Lord, without a doubt,
By virtue of the blood;
For nothing can destroy the life
That's hid with Christ in God. —Anon.

We can really live if we are ready to die.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

A Purpose That Sustains

READ: 2 Corinthians 11:21-29

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. —PHILIPPIANS 1:21

Austrian psychiatrist Viktor Frankl was imprisoned by the Nazis during the Holocaust. Once set free, he wrote *Man's Search For Meaning*, which became a perennial bestseller. In it, Frankl shared an all-important lesson he had learned from his suffering: "There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that would so effectively help one to survive even the worst conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life."

The apostle Paul also underwent repeated suffering (2Corinthians 11:23, 24, 25, 26, 27). He certainly had a purpose that sustained him. He told the leaders of the Ephesian church, "Now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:22, 23, 24).

We too have a purpose and a task—God has called us to bear witness of the Savior. We may not suffer as Paul did, but we can find in our faith a meaning that helps us walk steadfastly through life's toughest experiences. —Vernon C Grounds

I shall not fear the battle
If Thou art by my side,

Nor wander from the pathway
If Thou wilt be my guide. —Bode

**Knowing God gives meaning to life;
obeying God gives purpose to life.**

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

"He's In Heaven"

READ: 2 Corinthians 5:1-8

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. —Philippians 1:21

On August 28, 2003, my good friend Kurt De Haan, the former managing editor of Our Daily Bread, died of a heart attack while on his lunchtime run. When I learned the news, I said to myself, "He's in heaven," which brought me great comfort.

A few days later I was talking with my former pastor Roy Williamson, now in his eighties. I asked him about a man from our congregation. "He's in heaven," he said. I also inquired about another person. "She's in heaven too," he replied. Then, eyes twinkling, he said, "I know more people in heaven than I do on earth."

Later I was thinking about Pastor Williamson's words. He could have simply said, "He died," or "She died." But how reassuring to hear that those dear saints of God are in heaven. What joy to know that when believers in Christ die, they are instantly with Jesus! The apostle Paul put it like this: "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2Co 5:8). No more pain. No more sadness. No more sin. Only peace. Only joy. Only glory.

We still grieve when a believing loved one dies. Grief is love's expression. But beneath it all is an unshakable joy, because we know our loved one is in heaven. —David C. Egner

Friends will be there I have loved long ago,
Joy like a river around me will flow;
Yet, just a smile from my Savior, I know
Will through the ages be glory for me. —Gabriel

God's children never say goodbye for the last time.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

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By virtue of the blood;
For nothing can destroy the life
That's hid with Christ in God. -- Anon.

We can really live when we're ready to die.

PHILIPPIANS 1:21

Living In Retirement

READ: Philippians 1:12-21

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. —Php 1:21

As our plane landed at Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris, applause broke out among a group of airline employees. I thought this was a bit unusual, until I was told that the pilot had just completed the last flight of his career. He would retire the next day, and his colleagues were expressing their happiness for him.

For many people, retirement means doing what they have always wanted to do—fish, golf, travel. Others work hard to retire early so they can enjoy the fruit of their labor while still young and healthy.

The Christian looks at retirement differently. An elderly friend who loves the Lord put it this way: "Tonight, I will retire to my bed. Tomorrow morning, should the Lord give me life to live, I will wake up and serve Him." He had Paul's perspective: "To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Paul's sole purpose was to glorify Christ. Whatever came of suffering, imprisonment, or hardship was another opportunity to further the gospel and live for Him.

There is always work to be done for the Lord. As long as we live, Christ can work in and through us if we adopt Paul's outlook on life and death. For him, there was no retirement from serving the Lord. —Albert Lee

Growing old but not retiring,
For the battle still is on;
Going on without relenting
Till the final victory's won. —Anon.

**Retirement from our jobs—yes.
Retirement from serving Christ—never!**

PHILIPPIANS 1:27

Keep On Writing

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:1-6

The following poem written by Paul Gilbert is intended to encourage us as Christians to be persuasive, flesh-and-blood testimonies for our Savior.

**You're writing a "gospel,"
A chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do,
By the words that you say;**

**Men read what you write,
Whether faithless or true;
Say, what is the "gospel"
According to you?**

Sometimes, however, our writing is done with scratchy pens. Maybe it's badly blurred and so illegible that God's message can't be deciphered.

Hannah More, an outstanding witness for the gospel in 19th-century England, sometimes felt discouraged about the quality of her spiritual penmanship. Although she organized schools for the unevangelized poor and wrote many tracts and hymns, she had a low opinion of her effectiveness. This was her self-appraisal: "God is sometimes pleased to work with the most unworthy instruments—I suppose to take away every shadow of doubt that it is His own doing. It always gives me the idea of a great author writing with a very bad pen."

Yet we need not be discouraged. God, the great Author, is able to use even scratchy pens like you and me to communicate His message to people around us. Regardless of how we appraise our penmanship, let's prayerfully keep on writing. --V C Grounds

We're not called to work for God,

but to let God work through us.

PHILIPPIANS 1:27

SPURGEON - MORNING AND EVENING

The word "conversation" does not merely mean our talk and converse with one another, but the whole course of our life and behaviour in the world. The Greek word signifies the actions and the privileges of citizenship: and thus we are commanded to let our actions, as citizens of the New Jerusalem, be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. What sort of conversation is this? In the first place, the gospel is very simple. So Christians should be simple and plain in their habits. There should be about our manner, our speech, our dress, our whole behaviour, that simplicity which is the very soul of beauty. The gospel is pre-eminently true, it is gold without dross; and the Christian's life will be lustreless and valueless without the jewel of truth. The gospel is a very fearless gospel, it boldly proclaims the truth, whether men like it or not: we must be equally faithful and unflinching. But the gospel is also very gentle. Mark this spirit in its Founder: "a bruised reed he will not break." Some professors are sharper than a thorn-hedge; such men are not like Jesus. Let us seek to win others by the gentleness of our words and acts. The gospel is very loving. It is the message of the God of love to a lost and fallen race. Christ's last command to his disciples was, "Love one another." O for more real, hearty union and love to all the saints; for more tender compassion towards the souls of the worst and vilest of men! We must not forget that the gospel of Christ is holy. It never excuses sin: it pardons it, but only through an atonement. If our life is to resemble the gospel, we must shun, not merely the grosser vices, but everything that would hinder our perfect conformity to Christ. For his sake, for our own sakes, and for the sakes of others, we must strive day by day to let our conversation be more in accordance with his gospel.

PHILIPPIANS 1:27

Loud Silence

Read: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ. --Philippians 1:27

The world famous master of mime, Marcel Marceau, was asked what the difference was between regular acting and pantomime. Marceau's response was interesting. He said, "In the case of a bad actor, the words are there even if the actor is no good. But when a mime is not good, there is nothing left. A mime must be very clear and very strong."

The same thing is true of the Christian's witness. If a believer's verbal testimony is rejected, it may be wise for him to say no more. But it's then that silence should speak so clearly that no one can mistake the message.

For example, in the case of a married couple, the wife's quiet reverence for God should be crystal-clear to her unbelieving husband so that he may be won "without a word" (1Pet. 3:1, 2-note). Husbands are reminded by Peter to live with their wives with understanding and honor (1Pe 3:7-note). If the wife is the one who needs a wordless witness, then the husband's character and treatment of her should reflect his relationship to Jesus Christ.

These truths apply to every believer, married or not. If we are in a situation where our actions alone have to do the talking, let's make sure they are coming through loud and clear for Christ. --M R De Haan II

Sometimes our witness will be spurned
And nothing's left to say;
But if our lives are true to Christ,
His love we will convey. --DJD

**When our lives honor Christ,
even silence is eloquent**

PHILIPPIANS 1:29

F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ ... to suffer. (r.v.) - Php 1:29

The child of God is often called to suffer, because nothing will convince onlookers of the reality and power of true religion as suffering will do, when it is borne with Christian resignation and fortitude. And how great the compensations are!

He can keep in such perfect peace. He can make lonely times, when no one is near the couch, to be so full of sweet fellowship and

communion. He can put such strong, soft hands under the tired limbs, resting them. He can give refreshment to the spirit when the body is deprived of sleep.

Every one cannot be trusted with suffering. All could not stand the fiery ordeal. They would speak rashly and complainingly, So the Master has to select with careful scrutiny the branches which can stand the knife; the jewels which can bear the wheel. It is given to some to preach, to others to work, but to others to suffer. Accept it as a gift from his hand. Look up and take each throb of pain, each hour of agony, as his gift. Dare to thank Him for it. Look inside the envelope of pain for the message it enfolds. It is a rough packing-case, but there is treasure in it.

And can you not minister to other sufferers? Can you not dictate letters of comfort, or pray for them, or devise little alleviations and surprises for those who have not what you have? Suffering is on Christ's behalf; it must, then, be intended as part of that great ministry for the world in which He, with his saints, is engaged. There is a sense in which all suffering, borne in the spirit of Calvary, helps men, not in the way of atonement or propitiation, of course, but by the exhibition of the power of God's grace in the sufferer.

PHILIPPIANS 1:29

A Bumpy Road

READ: Philippians 1:27-30

To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. —PHILIPPIANS 1:29

When people tell me life is hard, I always reply, "Of course it is." I find that answer more satisfying than anything else I can say. Writer Charles Williams said, "The world is painful in any case; but it is quite unbearable if anybody gives us the idea that we are meant to be liking it."

The path by which God takes us often seems to lead away from what we perceive as our good, causing us to believe we've missed a turn and taken the wrong road. That's because most of us have been taught to believe that if we're on the right track God's goodness will always translate into a life free of trouble.

But that's a pipe dream far removed from the biblical perspective. God's love often leads us down roads where earthly comforts fail us. Paul said, "To you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). When we come to the end of all our dark valleys, we'll understand that every circumstance has been allowed for our ultimate good.

"No other route would have been as safe and as certain as the one by which we came," Bible teacher F. B. Meyer said. "If only we could see the path as God has always seen it, we would have selected it as well."—David H. Roper

If some darker lot be good,
Lord, teach us to endure
The sorrow, pain, or solitude
That makes the spirit pure. —Irons

**No trial would cause us to despair
if we knew God's reason for allowing it.**

PHILIPPIANS 1:29

Bridges Of Grace

READ: Acts 5:33-42

They departed ... , rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. —Acts 5:41

Imagine for a moment that you are driving through the desert in Southern California and you see the magnificent Golden Gate Bridge spanning the dried-up bed of "Three Frogs Creek" on the outskirts of "Turtle Soup Junction." What a ridiculous sight that would be!

So too, the Lord never displays His power and grace at an inappropriate time or place, but He always provides according to the difficulty of the hour. He does not impart strength until it is needed.

We shudder when we think of what some of God's children are enduring because of their faithfulness to the Savior. Many have chosen the path of intense suffering rather than following the line of least resistance. I wonder, would we do the same?

Of course, the Lord does not ask us to make such a commitment before it is necessary. And we can be sure that when we "suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29), He will provide whatever we need to endure the pain.

As servants of Christ, we can take one step at a time and be confident that whether we come to a dried-up gulch or a surging river, the Lord's bridges of grace will be just right to allow us safe passage to the other side. —Mart De Haan

Each day God sends His loving aid
To strengthen you and me;
We need to use today's supply
And let tomorrow be. —Anon.

**God gives enough grace
For each trial we face**