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# TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST.

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“For to me to live is Christ.”—PHIL. i. 21.

THESE are the words of an earnest man and a ripe Christian. Even before his conversion Paul was a man of great earnestness, and of singular concentration of purpose. He was a Pharisee after the strictest sect. He excelled all other young men of his own age in his attainments in the Jewish learning. He was exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the elders. When that new sect arose which, as he thought, threatened to overthrow the religion of his fathers, he was among its most zealous persecutors. So exceedingly mad was he against them that he persecuted them even unto strange cities. While on a mission of this kind there came to him that voice out of heaven which changed his whole life. The tide which before had been striving to check the current of Christianity now turned and flowed with it in increased volume and force. Paul now became as earnest a Christian as he had before been a Pharisee. All that had been gain to him he now counted loss that he might win Christ. He devoted himself to the service of Christ until it became the absorbing purpose of his life. He now said, “This *one* thing I do.”

This epistle was written near the close of his life. His labors and sufferings for his Master's cause, his life

of communion with him had ripened his character to that degree of consecration which marks this whole epistle. He was writing from prison at Rome. The news of his arrest must have spread consternation throughout Christendom. Especially must it have brought sorrow and dismay to this loving and beloved people. He wishes to cheer and encourage them. "I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me, so far from proving to be a calamity to the cause of Christ, have turned out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel. For many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. It is true, some preach Christ from wrong motives, supposing to add affliction to my bonds. But whether in pretence or truth, Christ is preached, and therein I do rejoice and will continue to rejoice. It is my earnest expectation and my hope, that as always heretofore, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. And it matters not to me which, for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

"To me to live is Christ." Notice the singular wording of the text. It is a pregnant construction. Paul states an equation, of which "to live" is the first member, and "Christ" is the second. He affirms some sort of an identity between Christ and the Christian's life. What does he mean?

There are two very common senses in which we use the word "life." The first is in the sense of the vital principle, that mysterious force which animates dead matter, upon whose presence depends nourishment and growth. We use the word in this sense when we say, "Life is extinct." The second is in the sense of the sum of the activities of body and soul, the outworking

of the inward principle. We use it in this sense when we say of a man that he lived a useful life, or when we say, "Life is real, life is earnest."

We use the word in both these senses when we refer to the spiritual as well as the natural life. When we speak of the spiritual life we may mean either its vital principle or the outworking of that principle in spiritual thoughts, desires, words and deeds. Paul affirms an identity between Christ and the Christian's life in both these senses. He affirms it in the first sense in Galatians ii. 20, when he says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." That is, Christ is the author and sustainer of that inward principle of the new life.

But I think that in our text he is using it in the second sense. He refers to the outward development of the life that is within; the sum of its thoughts, purposes, activities, and sufferings; to his life as a whole. As Christ is the source of the inward spiritual life, so he is the end and object of its outward development. As the earth derives her life from the light and heat of the sun, develops that life into countless forms of use and beauty, then, circling within the orbit of his attraction, exhibits the infinite variety of her life, thus returning that which he gave; so the Christian derives his inner spiritual life from Christ, develops it into spiritual graces and activities, then, revolving about him as the great centre of attraction, consecrates to him the life which he has given.

"Christ liveth in me—to me to live is Christ!" What a philosophy of life we have in these two sentences! What a sublime explanation of its source and end! And

to think that it came from a prisoner, awaiting a felon's death! Contrast it with the sad pessimism of the royal skeptic: "The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything."

I shrink from trying to analyze this text, lest I should seem to mar its force and beauty. But for the sake of confining our attention to it for a little while, let us look at it in this way: 1. Christ gives to life its purpose—his glory; 2. Christ gives to life its motive—his love; 3. Christ gives to life its character—nobility; 4. Christ gives to life its issue—success.

I. Christ gives to life its purpose—his glory. Life must have an end as well as an origin, a purpose as well as a cause. We are just as much compelled to believe that everything has a final cause as that it has an efficient cause. The one belief is just as intuitive as the other. To use the old illustration, if we saw a watch for the first time, we should not only believe that somebody made it, but that he made it for some purpose. If our first question were, Who made it? Our next would be, For what purpose did he make it? The second question is just as necessary as the first, and the mind will not rest until both are answered. The effort to find the answer to these two questions gives rise to all philosophy and science. This question rises to supreme importance when it concerns the human life. The question, How did we come into being? is of no more importance than the question, For what do we live? And as the efficient cause, so must the final cause of life be adequate to account for it. Life as a whole must have some sufficient purpose. It is not enough to find an object for the intellect, another for the faculty of taste, another for the affections. Man's life is not a mere sum of so many days, months, and years; it is not

a mere bundle of thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. There must be unity in the purpose of life. This unity of purpose is necessary to the success of life as a whole. There must be some one object upon which all man's faculties may be centered, and which is worthy of their highest and noblest exercise. In any part of life singleness of purpose and concentration of effort are necessary to success. Some years ago I was passing down a river valley. One scene I remember, where the river spreads its whole volume of water into a broad and beautiful lake, surrounded by mountain walls. Beautiful, but useless. Just beside the river ran a canal, narrow, but deep. That canal perhaps did not contain one-tenth the volume of water which the river did, but it had once carried the commerce of a nation. So, if a man would attain success among the world's workers, he must choose his calling, and concentrate his powers upon it. Now, if this be true of the component parts of life, how much more of life itself? In an orchestra, not only must every instrument be in tune with itself, but every one must be attuned to all the others. So there must be some common chord to which all the faculties of the soul may be attuned, in order to make of life a perfect harmony. A man may seem to have been a success in his business or profession, to have been happy in his affections, to have had every taste gratified, and yet his life as a whole may have been one stupendous failure. When death comes, he will be like a tree whose fruit has been killed by an untimely frost, whose leaves have been scattered by the winds, and whose trunk, worm-eaten and decayed, has returned to the elements from whence it came.

Such a purpose was given man in his first creation—the glory of God. This alone is an end unto itself; this alone was worthy of man's life; this alone could call all

man's faculties into their highest and noblest exercise. But when man fell he prostituted his powers to baser ends. He lost both the power and the will to live for God's glory. In redeeming man Christ has restored to him this same purpose in a new form. It is now the glory of God in and through Christ. Under the gospel the glory of God as embodied in Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is man's chief end. Through him all approach to God must be made, through him all work for God's glory must be done. "Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's; for to this end Christ both died and revived and rose again that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living."

All that is worthy of human effort is embraced under this purpose. To seek the glory of Christ is to seek the highest development of one's own soul, and the highest good of one's fellow-men. It includes all that humanitarianism offers as the end of human effort, and infinitely more. Christ is the chord to which all the faculties of the soul must be attuned to make of human life a harmony which shall resound throughout eternity to the glory of God.

II. Christ gives to life its motive—his love. To make a success of life as a whole there must not only be a purpose worthy of all the powers of a human soul, but a motive which will arouse them to their highest energy. Motive is to the soul what steam is to an engine. Without steam the most perfect machinery is useless; without a life-motive the most highly-gifted soul is worse than useless.

I once saw a painting in some art gallery of a beauti-

ful vessel, under full sail, becalmed upon a glassy ocean. To me there was a sadness in the picture which was only enhanced by its beauty. I could not but think how many souls are like that vessel, endowed with the highest powers of mind and heart, yet becalmed upon the ocean of life—without a life-motive!

Said George Eliot, "What makes life dreary is the want of motive." How many wasted lives testify to the truth of that saying! "Is life worth living?" The answer depends upon the answer to the questions, "Has life an end? has life a motive?" There is a great deal of pessimism in the world to-day because men cannot answer these question for themselves, and will not accept God's answer.

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,  
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air,"

is Gray's oft-quoted saying. So, hidden away in many a human soul precious gifts lie dormant, because no motive arouses them to exercise. How many Cincinnati or Putnams may be plowing in their fields to-day; how many Jacksons many be teaching in their little school-rooms, because their country's voice does not call them to arms! How many statesmen whose names might be written in their country's history are pursuing quiet avocations, leaving their places to be filled by demagogues, because patriotism does not call them to their country's service! Oh! how many talents are rusting in their napkins, because the love of Christ has not quickened the souls who possess them! How many are there in this congregation who are living selfish lives, prostituting precious gifts to the pursuit of filthy lucre or idle pleasure, because the love of Christ has no place

in your hearts? How many young men are here to-day who might be preaching the gospel and saving the lost, because the love of Christ does not constrain you? How many missionaries are here to-day who have not heard the call of duty, because the love of Christ has not quickened your ears?

It was the love of Christ that made Paul what he was and enabled him to do the work he did. Without it his name would have been buried to-day in the annals of Jewish rabbis.

The love of Christ is the only motive that can arouse *all* the powers of a soul into their highest and noblest exercise. And that is the strongest motive in the world to-day. It is doing more for the human race than all other motives combined. Make all the allowances you please for apathy of Christians and coldness in the church, the love of Christ still inspires the noblest sacrifices and the most arduous labors. The love of Christ is the true altruism. And this is the motive which Paul commends to you when he says, "To me to live is Christ."

III. Christ gives to life its character—nobility. The life whose purpose is the glory of Christ, whose motive is the love of Christ, however narrow its sphere, however humble its condition, is a noble life.

Was not Paul's a noble life? We can all see it now, but in his day he was despised both by Jew and Gentile. The noblest lives in the world's history have been those of followers of Jesus, of men whose motto has been: "To me to live is Christ." Some of you may say: "But we cannot all live such lives. If I could preach like Paul; if I could win nations to Christ; if I could write books which would overthrow error, or edify and comfort God's people; if I could be a great reformer like Luther, or a

great missionary ; if I could write hymns which should voice the devotions of God's people, then I might feel that a noble life was for me. But I can do none of these things. I have neither the talents nor the opportunities." Who has not felt the wish that his talents were increased and his sphere of influence widened, that his name might be written in the catalogue of noble lives? But, it is not necessary to be a Paul, a Luther, a Bunyan, a Whitefield, a Carey or a Moffat, a Havergal or a Prentiss, to live a noble life. It needs only that the life-purpose be the glory of Christ, and that the life-motive be the love of Christ. Most of us must live what men would call commonplace lives. But however commonplace, however humble, it is a noble life if Christ be its centre.

Paul's was a noble life, but was not Hannah's life noble, too? That mother who first consecrated her son to the service of God, then brought to the temple from year to year the garments which her loving fingers had fashioned for him in quiet obscurity—did she not live a noble life? I know of a mother who, left early a widow with little children, had worked for years to support and educate them, looking forward to the time when her first-born son should take her burden from her shoulders. But just when he was emerging from boyhood he heard the call of God's Spirit to preach the gospel. Sore as the trial was, she gave him up to the service of her Master. Was not hers a noble life? And there are many such lives not recorded in man's history. Mary is only one of many thousands of women who have anointed their Saviour with the costly fragrance of their lives, yet she is one of very few whose names are spoken wherever the gospel is preached. All have heard of Augustine and Chrysostom, yet how many have never heard of

Monica and Anthusa, the Christian mothers to whom the church owes these men. The world resounds with Luther's fame, but how few outside of the students of church history have heard of John Staupitz, who led him to Christ. And there are thousands of lives just as noble which have not received even bare mention in church history. But when we come to study the history of the church which the recording angel is now writing we shall find their names in letters of gold.

In a life consecrated to Christ, the needle, the plow, the saw, the counter, the desk, are instruments in doing God's work. The humblest Christian life is nobler than that of warriors, kings, orators, and statesmen, whose names are immortalized in man's imperfect histories.

IV. Christ gives to life its issue—success. I have said that in order to the success of life as a whole there is need of unity of design. But we cannot plan our lives with any certainty for a single day, how much less for the months and the years to come! Still less can we make our lives work together with those of others. We work often in utter ignorance of the design of the work we are doing. But there is over all a Master-mind, overseeing, directing all in accordance with a foreordained plan of infinite wisdom. I was once invited to ride with an engineer along the line of a railroad in process of construction. In one place I saw some digging into a hill, others shovelling the earth into carts, others hauling it away and dumping it into a valley. Each was doing his own work without paying any attention to others. A mile or so further on I saw another gang of workmen without any apparent connection with the first. I saw some of these with drills in their hands patiently striking away at exactly the same spot in the rock for hours. I saw others putting dynamite into the holes thus drilled.

I saw others sharpening instruments, tempering drills, and forging tools. As we drove along the engineer showed me a line of stakes leading from one gang to another. The whole road had been surveyed. I saw then the connection between the different squads of workmen, and their different tasks. All were working together, each in his own place and task, under the superintendence of the engineer. Unity of plan pervaded the whole, so that not a blow of the pick or stroke of the drill was wasted.

So Christ, the great Engineer, overlooks and directs the work of all those in his employ, so that it effects his design. He thus unifies the life of the individual Christian, and of the whole church in all ages. It was by his direction that Paul became a missionary to the Gentiles, instead of preaching to the Jews as he thought he ought to do. It was by his call that Paul went to Europe. Even what seem to us to be disasters are parts of his plan, and work out the accomplishment of his purpose. Thus Paul's arrest, voyage, and imprisonment at Rome, which seemed to be a great calamity, was ordered by Christ, and turned out rather for the furtherance of the gospel.

Somewhere I have read a story of a monk who, in the century before the Reformation, had discovered the truth by reading the Bible. He was shut up for the rest of his life in a dungeon. There he contrived to write his views, and concealed them in the walls of his dungeon. Long after his death the manuscript was discovered, published, and became a means of advancing the Reformation. Even our failures are overruled for good. Indeed, in the Christian life there is no such thing as failure. We may not live to see it, but Christ will give it success. Even death, that black shadow of disaster, which lies across the path of every natural life, is to the

Christian the entering into the reward of his labors, the crown of success; for he can not only say, "To me to live is Christ," but "to die is gain."

Now, dear friends, will you not make this, "To me to live is Christ," the motto of your life? Oh! what a different world this would be, if it were only tried by men and women in every walk of life! If only the preacher, whenever he stands in his pulpit or visits the homes of his people, would forget himself, and remember, "To me to live is Christ"! Would that every physician, as he goes about with his ministry of healing; every lawyer, as he pleads in the courts of justice; every politician, as he accepts the office entrusted to him by his countrymen; every business-man, every laborer, made this the rule of conduct, "To me to live is Christ"! Oh! that every wife and mother would make this the spirit of the home, "To me to live is Christ"! Oh! that every woman to whom beauty, or wealth, or position, or talent, has given a commanding position in society, would consecrate that influence to Christ! What a different world it would be!

Young men! you who stand upon the threshold of life, who are seeking to determine aright your choice of a profession, who are making your plans for the future, will you not, before all these, make the choice of a life-purpose and a life-motive? Will you not determine, whatever your choice of a life-calling may be, that this shall be its aim and motive, "To me to live is Christ"! Then let other choices be what they may, your life will be a noble life, a successful life. Will you not all join me in the petition:

"Father, I lift my prayer to thee,  
To grant me this, my earnest plea,  
The motto of my life may be,  
'To me to live is Christ.'

“Thy strengthening grace, O, Lord, I pray  
That I, with each returning day,  
From loving heart may truly say,  
‘To me to live is Christ.’

“My life, O, Christ, thou gavest me,  
A life from fear of death set free,  
That life I consecrate to thee,  
‘To me to live is Christ.’

“One purpose o’er my powers shall reign  
One motive all my heart constrain,  
Through all my life run this refrain,  
‘To me to live is Christ.’

“Thy glory be my life’s sole end,  
To that let all my powers tend,  
To that all my ambitions bend,  
‘To me to live is Christ.’

“The love of Christ constraineth me,  
That love my one incentive be  
Inflame my answering love to thee,  
‘To me to live is Christ.’

“To loftier aim could soul aspire?  
What nobler life could heart desire,  
What motive such devotion fire?  
‘To me to live is Christ.’

“Then when life’s labors all are o’er,  
Its cares and sorrows are no more,  
And death stands knocking at the door  
‘In Christ to die is gain.’”