“A matter of life and death”
I would like to begin by asking you all a question. How would your thoughts turn if you knew that you were about to die? What would be your philosophy of living and dying, that you would pass on to your loved ones if you only had a little time and just had a few words to say?

Please turn your bibles to the Book of Philippians.

We find that the apostle Paul is in that very situation. Remember that Paul is in a Roman prison. He doesn't know whether he will live or die. He faces the possibility of immanent death. In Philippians 1:21 Paul sums up everything we need to know about living and dying using very few words. Paul says, "To live is Christ and to die is gain."

Nowhere in this letter, will you find Paul in a self-pity kind of thinking mode. As far as Paul is concerned he is in a no lose situation. If he lives, he lives for Christ. If he dies, he is with Christ, which is gain. Paul is saying, "It doesn't matter what happens, he's going to be OK". You see, Paul is obsessed with Christ. He knows it doesn't matter what happens to him because he can't lose. Because to Paul, Christ is a matter of life and death.

What about you? Do you summarize life and death in terms of Christ? Most people don't. Most people live by a different philosophy of live and death. Let me share with you other people's philosophies. "To live is me and to die is tragic". But “me” is a very small reason for living and it leads to a very empty kind of living.

I think this explains why there is so much despair, depression and fear in the world today. Because most people have 2 great fears. 1. They are afraid they might die tonight. 2. They are afraid they might live tomorrow.

You see, dying frightens them and living has no passion. Then there are people like Paul, they have a passion for living and they have a passion for dying. And if you were to ask them which one they would choose, they couldn't answer because they have a passion for both.

Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 1:21-26. "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through me being with you again your joy in Christ will overflow on account of me".

Paul has summed up the philosophy of living and dying that will change your life. Let's look at living. Paul says that, "Christ provides the purpose for joy and living". A lot of people don't have a reason for living. You work hard to get a new car. You work hard to buy a new house. You work hard to build a business.

For what? You ask yourself "I have achieved all this and yet I don't feel any better". The problem is that people say, "I don't have enough to live on" But the real problem is that they don't have enough to live for.

What about Paul? Paul had a passion for living. Paul says, "He's not afraid to live" because if he lives, it's going to matter. Because if he lives he knows, it's going to make a difference. He says, to the Philippians, "He's going to continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith."
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Paul loved living, because that meant that he could bring the joy of Jesus to other people. Why is there so much depression today? Because there is so much pre-occupation with self today. Why did God leave you on this earth? Why do I have one more day to live?

You see, Satan is selling us a lie. He's saying, "The reason you are still alive is because you are not saved yet". He's saying, "You better work hard to try and earn that salvation before you die". Isn't that a miserable way to live your life? When Jesus died on the cross, he said, "It is finished."

And if you are united with Jesus Christ, there's no condemnation for people in Jesus Christ as Paul tells the Romans 8:1. And everything for your salvation has already been done. And your salvation is a settled issue.

So why are you still here? Not to finish your salvation. Your still here because God knows that somebody else needs you. That's why you're here. You see, God doesn't let you live another day for you, but for somebody else.

Life in these bodies will never be joyful as long as we look for our own interests and not for the interests of others. Paul is saying that, "As long as God has got something for him to do, he will stay". Although he wants to die and go home to Jesus. You see, the quality of your life, really does depend on the quality of your investments. Because one day we are all going to stand in front of God and give an account of everyday that was a gift from Him.

So what are we going to show him? We can say, "Well, in my life time, I built a house" We can say, "Well, in my lifetime, I had a good job". Or "God, I had a nice retirement". Do you realize that all that stuff is going to be incinerated when Jesus comes back? I think it would be better to invest your life in something eternal. Everyday day you live, is a gift of grace from God to be used to invest in people.

Who's going to cry at your funeral? Who's going to cry because a major source of joy in their lives has gone? That's what Paul said, "It is necessary for me to continue living, so that you can have joy on account of me."

Who are you a joy to? That's why you are here, that's why you are still living. Because the use of your life is something that will last forever. And only Christ can give that much living. Why did I get drunk? Why did I take drugs?

I was trying to put meaning into an otherwise meaningless life. But that's just half the story. Because not only does Christ give us a meaning for living. Paul says that, "Christ gives us the hope and courage for dying."

What about some of the things we say around the time of death? What about when someone is dying, they say, "It doesn't look like they have got long to live." Let me share something with you. Nobody in this room has got long to live, everybody here is terminal. Do you know what I am?

I am a dying man, talking to a room of dying people about the only person I know, that can give us life. None of us has got long to live. What about this phrase, "Well, there probably better off" "PROBABLY!!" Why do we think it is a shame when a Christian dies? Paul says, "Not probably, they are far better of" Paul says, "I desire to depart and be with Christ which is better by far."
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This woman asked me once, "Have I got life insurance?" And I told her, "No, I've got soul assurance". Let me ask you this, what is a tent? A tent is not your home. A tent is a place you sleep in because you're going somewhere else. Then you fold up that tent, you pack it up, so that you can go where you are going too.

That's what Paul says. He said, "This isn't my home; this isn't where I belong, because I'm ready to go home," Life isn't about cardinal things or success. It's about eternity rather than time. Our bodies are getting older and breaking down. It wasn't meant to last a long time, it's not meant to be permanent.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:1+2. "Now we know if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house not built with human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling."

Why did Paul want to die and go to Jesus? Maybe part of it was to release the kingdom pressure. Maybe part of it was the burden of the churches. But the main reason Paul wanted to go was simple. Paul wanted the company of Christ. Paul says, "When he goes, he's going to have Christ like he's never had him before." He's going to have union with Christ.

Let me ask you something! Do you ever get homesick for heaven? Do you ever just hurt inside to get to heaven? Do you know how sometimes we don't? Because we need to improve our personal relationship with Jesus. We need to get to the point, where we are so obsessed with Christ and so in love with Christ that the thought of having more Christ just makes your heartache.

It's strange but there are people all over the world who are living like that. People all over the world today are still deciding that Jesus is a matter of life and death. That's how we should feel about Jesus. Let me share with you 3 things that we need to take out of our heads and into our hearts

1. We need to eternalise the certainty of salvation.

Let me ask you, do you know where you are going when you die? Paul knew exactly what would happen if he died. He knew where he was going.

Once a year we try to go on holiday as a family and I usually leave all the preparation and packing for the kids to take care of because I usually forget some things. But to go on any journey you need to at least know where you are going. But the point is, you would want to make sure you are going to be able to get there before you start, wouldn't you?

Paul knew that someday, Christians would weep and put that old tent of his in the ground. And say, "Goodbye" to it. But even as they did, on the other side. Jesus was going to say, "Hello" to the new one.

2. We also need to eternalise the necessity of service.

Because life is not measured by duration, life is measured by donation. James tells us in James 4:13-14 "Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."
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Someone has calculated how a typical lifespan of 70 years is spent. Here is the estimate: We sleep for 23 years of our lives. We work for 16 years of our lives. We watch TV for 8 years of our lives. We spend 6 years of our lives eating. We travel 6 years of our lives. We have 4.5 years of leisure time. We suffer from illness 4 years of our lives. We spend 2 years of our lives dressing. And sadly we only spend 0.5 years of our lives devoted to religion.

Now that’s just an average number of years for your everyday average person. And I’m sure if we were to calculate these things with Christians the numbers would be different. But the point is this; we really need to make our short lives matter. We really need to use the gift of life, to give the gift of Jesus to somebody else. We really need to be a joy to them.

3. Finally, we need to eternalise the security of sacrifice.

Paul says, "I'm willing to give up everything I have for Jesus." Are you willing to do that? Are you willing to repent and turn to God? Are you willing to confess Jesus as Lord of your life? Are you willing to be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins? Are you willing to give up everything, so that you can gain even more?

You see loved ones we all need to say and believe, that we are going to love Him with all our mind, heart, soul and strength, and when we die, it will be a gain. Because the only way something can be a gain is if the reward you get is bigger than the investment you put in.

What Paul is saying is, "There's nothing you can give to Jesus that's not going to be a gain." There’s no safer investment you can make with your life, than to spend it on Jesus Christ. Paul says, "To live is Christ and to die is gain." Also in Romans 8:18 Paul says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

We really need to pray that we can be obsessed with Christ, because it really is a matter of life and death.

If after reading this you want to know more about living for Christ or if this sermon has raised other questions in your thoughts then please just contact me and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

God bless and thanks for taking the time to grow in your understanding of God’s Word.