

“For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” Philippians chapter 1 verse 21

They say you can't have your cake and eat it, but Paul is saying you can. He's saying that when a person is living by faith in Christ, ultimately it doesn't make much difference whether he or she lives or dies. Both are good.

If he lives, all the benefits of being a child of God are his as he works fruitfully for God. I know what he means. My son asked me a few years ago what I would do when I retired (who knows? it might happen one day). I replied that since I became a Christian 40 years ago God has always had somewhere for me to be and something for me to do, and I was sure he always will in the future. He said “Yes, you've always said that.” I know a lovely lady in her nineties who, for as long as I can remember, has always faced every change in her life wondering excitedly what God has for her to do, and still does today.

But if Paul dies, well, things are even better. His life's work over he will go to be with Christ and enjoy fullness of life to its ultimate degree. Perfect health, peace and joy forever in the presence of God. Who wouldn't want that?

So Paul concludes that to go to be with Christ is the best thing, but that to remain on earth is the most necessary for the moment, because he has work to do in drawing others to Christ and building them up and encouraging them in faith.

Death isn't pleasant, of course. We'd all like to pass peacefully in our beds, but realistically none of us knows the time or manner of our death. But the bible makes it clear that death is not a final end. It is just a transition from one kind of life to another kind of life. A better one, if we know Christ.

As we get older, we start to become aware that the years that are behind us are more than those in front of us, and that those that have passed seem to have done so very quickly. We also start to see that the things we have achieved and acquired in this world have only been for this world. We start to become less and less attached to the things of this world. They begin to matter less. We start to become aware of a longing somewhere inside us for a life where we don't get disillusioned with things we once thought would be the answer to our quest for happiness; where we can finally be free of the limitations and imperfections of our physical bodies and our fallen human nature; where what we now see, as the New Testament tells us, in part as in a mirror, we will see and know fully in all its perfection.

Prayer

Father, thank you for the promise of eternity, that says that if we know Christ as our Saviour we will one day enjoy all the perfection of heaven in the presence of God forever. We look forward to that with increasing longing as our lives progress. But we also know that we have important work to do for you in this world, and there is also much to do in us to make us fit for a perfect spiritual existence. Please grant that we will willingly, patiently and wholeheartedly live our lives fruitfully for you in this world. In Jesus' name, amen.

All these devotionals can be found on our website inghamitechurch.org on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.