

A LIFE WORTH LIVING AND A DEATH WORTH DYING Philippians 1:19-26

In 1993 when fishing in St. Mary's Glacier, Colorado, Bill Jeracki got his leg pinned under a boulder. Snow was in the forecast, and he was without a jacket, a pack, and communication. In a desperate attempt to survive, he used his flannel shirt as a tourniquet, and then used his fishing knife to cut off his own leg at the knee joint! He used hemostats from his fishing kit to clamp the bleeding arteries. He then crabbed walked to his truck and drove himself to the hospital! In 2003, Aron Ralston had a similar experience. While hiking in Utah, a boulder fell and pinned his right arm. After various attempts to get free, on the sixth day of being stuck there, he amputated his right forearm with a dull multi-tool. Exhausted, and dehydrated, he then repelled down a sixty-foot cliff, and hiked eight miles before finding a Dutch family who guided him to a rescue helicopter. He eventually made it to the hospital and survived. He has an autobiography called *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. An appropriate title!

What do these two stories teach us? Aside from some basic tips for adventure recreation, they teach us that *human beings will do remarkable things in order to live*. The whole world has witnesses this fight for survival in various ways, including the media's coverage of the horrific events of 9/11 and hurricane Katrina.

We will spend money on the best doctors; take up discipline eating habits; move to particular climates; climb up buildings, and jump off of them; and even cut off body parts to live. But there's a big question we must answer: "What do you live for?" In this short life – we don't know how long we will live – what will you live for?

Writing from a Roman prison, a chained man tells us about the meaning of life, and the glory of death. The apostle Paul tells us about a life worth living, and a death worth dying. Verse 21 summarizes it:

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (1:21, ESV)

This is one of the most quoted verses in the entire New Testament, and for good reason. This is what living and dying is about: Christ. Living is about serving Christ; dying is about being with Christ.

Fill in the Blank

Unfortunately, English translations can't capture the full beauty of this verse. There's no verb in Greek. We usually supply it with "is." But other verbs could be supplied to describe this idea of purpose, meaning, center, foundation, or power. To live *means* Christ. To live *depends* on Christ. To live *honors* Christ (Hanson, 81). The English translation does try to get at the cadence of the verse, but it really comes out in Greek. Hanson calls this the "drumbeat repetition of the same sounds" and that "Paul's own heartbeats are heard in the rhythm of these words" (Ibid).

To zen – Christos

To live – Christ

To apothanein –kerdos To die – gain

That's Paul's heartbeat.

While you may not get the full literary effect in an English translation, you can get the full heart effect, and that's the main thing! Do you see the glory of this truth?

The application of this verse appears with the little phrase at the beginning, "For to me." Paul resolved that he would live for Christ. Everyone must fill in this blank personally. How would you complete this sentence, "For to me, to live is _____?" It gets filled in with cheap substitutes: money, sexual pleasure, power, beauty, or entertainment, etc. But notice what gets placed in the second blank, "to die is _____" if you supply it with one of these substitutes, using the logic of this passage. If you say to live is *money*, then you would fill in the second blank with "to die is to be naked and broke." After all, you can't take it with you. If you say, to live is *sexual pleasure*, then you would conclude, "to die is to have no more pleasure." What about power? The second blank would be, "To die is to be powerless." What about to live is *beauty*? You must conclude, "to die is lose all beauty and rot." And if you live for *entertainment*, then your grave would read, "to die is to have no more fun."

In your short life, what will you live for? What will you die for? You don't want to merely live for money, sex, power, beauty, and entertainment. These are gifts from God, to be stewarded properly, but they aren't the aim in life. They often turn into idols. You want to spend your life on something that not only matters now, but will matter in a billion years: Christ. If you say to "to live is Christ" then you can joyfully say, "to die is gain." Living for Christ not only takes the sting out of death, living for Christ makes death gloriously attractive.

While many are wasting their lives pursuing empty treasures in this life, you can still find examples of people living out this Christ-centered vision of life. In my own local church (Imago Dei Church), we have an extraordinary amount of people preparing to do long-term missions. We have 80 plus people in the next five years leaving to make Christ known among the nations. In their going, they're saying (I hope!), "For *to me*, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." They're saying, "Jesus is my everything. And death is no enemy."

Of course, you don't have to go overseas to say this, but you have to fill in the blank: For to me, to live is _____." How do you fill it in?

Philippians 1:12-26

The apostle Paul has been telling the Philippians about his present situation. You can imagine your pastoral leadership going on a mission trip but not returning. If they sent you an email after about a month, you would probably want to open it!

The Philippians were concerned for Paul. But he doesn't say to them, "Hey, you guys please contact the Roman officials, and all your political leaders, and please work the system to get me out of prison." Instead, Paul spends verses 12-26 comforting the Philippians. He essentially tells them not to worry about him because his suffering has led to the advance of the Gospel, that the whole palace guard is hearing, and others are boldly proclaiming Christ (12-15);

he tells them not to be concerned with the envious evangelists, since they are proclaiming Christ (1:16-18); and now he says they shouldn't be worried about him since Christ will be exalted in his life and death. They have no need to be worried, and no need to be ashamed. He's comforting his friends before launching into his exhortations and encouragements beginning in verse 27 extending through the rest of the book.

Let's consider these verses in light of Paul's ambition and his inspiring vision. We see his *ambition* of honoring Christ in verses 18-20. He expounds his *vision* of being with Christ, specifically in verse 23, as he relates this win-win situation that he has (22-26). Later in the letter Paul says, "What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me – practice these things" (Phil 4:9a, ESV). We need to look at the words and example of Paul, and follow him as a Christian.

The Christian's Ambition: Honoring Christ (1:18b-20)

Paul provides three ways the Christian should seek to honor Christ: (1) by rejoicing in Christ; (2) by relying on Christ; and (3) by representing Christ. In these ways, we find a life worth living. There's a great difference in making a living, and making a life. Let's learn how to live here.

By Rejoicing in Christ Consistently (18b)

Paul concluded the previous section with "I rejoice" (18a). But not, he turns his eyes to the future, "I *will* rejoice" (18b, my emphasis). After reporting his present situation, Paul tells them his plans for the future, and they include rejoicing in Christ. He is confident and joyful despite his situation because his sufferings can't squeeze out his joy. If life, suffering, or death, Paul will rejoice.

"So what are your plans for the future?" Have you heard this question lately? Maybe you have great plans; maybe you have no idea. Whether you plan on going to the nations, planting a church, or planting corn, make this your plan for the future: "I will rejoice in Christ all my days."

Rejoicing, especially in suffering, greatly honors Jesus. You rejoice in what you value. When you rejoice in suffering, it really shows people that your treasure isn't anything in this world. Everything can fall apart, and you can still sing because Christ is your treasure.

God's people have passed on this legacy to us. The prophet Habakkuk demonstrated this steadfast commitment to "rejoice in the Lord" despite having no food in the fields and no herd in the stalls (Hab 3:17-20). Job could say "blessed be the name of the Lord" despite losing everything (Job 1:20-21). Hanson notes, "The prospect of [Paul's] trial drove him to prayer, but not to despair" (77). What are your trials causing you to do – pray or pout? Praise or protest? Let us look to Jesus in our difficulty and find Habakkuk-like, Job-like, Paul-like joy.

By Relying on Christ Completely (19)

In verse 19, Paul speaks of the source of his joyful confidence. He's relying on the prayers of the Philippians and the sufficiency of the Spirit of Christ:

because I know this will lead to my deliverance through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. (1:19)

Commentators point out that Paul quotes exactly from Job 13:16LXX. And he may have been reflecting on the life of Job, who also suffered even though he committed no crime. If Paul meditates on Scripture in the midst of suffering, how much more do we? Here's what he quotes:

*Even if He kills me, I will hope in Him....
Yes, **this will result in my deliverance** (Job 13:15b-16a, my emphasis)*

What exactly does Paul mean by *deliverance*? Does he mean release from prison? Or does he mean deliverance in the sense of final salvation? The former seems like a legitimate interpretation based upon verses 25-26, where Paul states his confidence that he will survive and be reunited with the Philippians. In verse 19, he says, "I know," and in verse 25 he says, "I know," showing an apparent consistency of thought. In addition to this clue, the term itself is can speak of preservation and deliverance from temporary crises (see Acts 7:25; 27:31).

However, I tend to side with Silva, Hanson, Witherington, and others that Paul is probably referring to final salvation and ultimate *vindication*. Even though he does believe he will be delivered in verses 25-26 that doesn't mean that this reference in verse 19 has to mean release from prison. It still could mean deliverance in a final, ultimate sense, as Paul is talking about in the following verses, particularly in 1:20-21, 23, and in 1:28b. In addition to these references, another compelling argument for this interpretation is the context of the Job 13 reference. Witherington says, "The context of Job is important there. The issue is Job's standing before God and his vindication.... Presumably, then, 'this' [Phil 1:19] refers to all the things that have happened to Paul, both good and bad, and he is reflecting on his own experience in light of that of Job. God will work these things out for Paul's ultimate good, and if things go badly, humanly speaking, God can provide a bountiful supply of the Spirit's aid so that Paul can endure and remain a good witness to the end." He goes on, "*Soteria* surely does not mean personal safety here, for v. 20 suggest that Paul will obtain *soteria* whether or not his trial turns out favorably" (Witherington, 46; cf., 2:12; 2 Tim 4:18).

What I want to emphasize here, is not only Paul's confidence in the sovereignty of God (though we could linger here!), but how Paul plans on being sustained in the trial: through *the prayers of the Philippians* and *the Spirit of Christ*.

We too will endure hard times and ultimately arrive at our ultimate destination in the same way, by relying on the sufficiency of the Spirit of Christ. How can you honestly say, “For to me, to live is Christ?” You need the Spirit of Christ to say this, and live this. Otherwise, you will live for something else.

Notice the relationship between prayer and God’s provision of the Spirit (Rom 8:26). Don’t think your prayers don’t matter! God uses means, and one of the means for sustaining His servants are the prayers of His people. Don’t presume upon a strong degree of the Spirit’s presence either! Such power comes through prayer. The omnipresence of God isn’t synonymous with the affects and influences of the Spirit. While we can’t presume upon these influences even when we pray, we know that prayer is normal means that God uses to provide abundant help to the believer.

James reminds us that prayer is effectual (James 5:16). In the book of Acts, we have numerous examples of the church praying for boldness and endurance in trial (cf., Acts 12). Paul told the Corinthians that God was using their prayers to help them in his great trials (2 Cor 1:5, 8-11). He also implored the Romans, the Ephesians, Colossians, and the Thessalonians to pray for him (Rom 15:30; Eph 6:18-19; Col 4:3-4; 1 Thess 5:25, 2 Thess 3:1). So this reference to the Philippians isn’t some passing comment. Paul really believed, like the other apostles and saints, that God used the prayers of His people to provide strength to His servants.

So then, let’s ask others to pray for us. And let’s pray for others. What an encouragement it is, to know that people are praying for you; and how important it is, that we are doing it for others.

By Representing Christ Courageously (20-21)

By the power of the Spirit of Christ, Paul confidently asserts his goal for the future:

My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death. (1:20)

When Paul uses the word “hope” he doesn’t mean it the way we often mean it. “I hope the Tigers make it to the World Series.” “I hope it doesn’t rain tomorrow.” Paul isn’t uncertain, but is confident that he will represent Jesus because of the sufficiency of the Spirit and the sovereignty of God.

His goal is quite simply to honor Christ. His desire is to represent Christ in both his living and in his dying. Paul says that he will not be ashamed, but will do this with all boldness. Imprisonment was a shameful thing in Paul’s day, but he knew that God was using his imprisonment for gospel purposes. He wasn’t concerned about his reputation, but about Jesus’ reputation. So, he would courageously represent Christ before the world in his defense of the gospel.

This is how you honor Jesus above all things: You care more about His glory than your glory, and you live this way with courage. Will you seek to honor something or

someone other than Jesus, and will you live as a coward or with courage? In Philippians 1:12-30, the theme of courage appears in several ways (14, 20, 28). Such boldness comes from the Spirit of Christ, as illustrated by the early church in the book of Acts (cf., Acts 4:29-31).

As we think about representing Jesus courageously, look again at verse 21.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (1:21, ESV)

Consider the (1) public nature of this statement, (2) the grace of this statement, and (3) the unstoppable mentality of this statement.

First, Paul isn't saying this is his "private goal," to live for Christ. His ambition in life made it's way into the public square; his ambition was visible to others. You are showing what's most important to you by how you live. In verse 22, he speaks of "fruitful labor." Don't say that you're living for Christ if there's no labor for Christ. If you're going to represent Him, then that means go public!

Second, we find that grace latter in the letter where Paul says that he has not yet attained this goal (Phil 3:12-15). Will we always live perfectly for Christ? No. Paul didn't achieve perfection. There's grace here. There's also grace in the fact that are labor for Christ is "fruitful" labor. This indicates that are life flows from our union with Christ. You need His grace to represent Him. Each day, we must saturate ourselves in His grace, and then resolve to live for Him faithfully before a watching world.

Third, when we are living in the grace of Jesus, empowered by His Spirit, we can share Paul's unstoppable mentality. You can live courageously for Christ because if they kill you, then you will be with Christ!

This verse has inspired countless Christians through the years, particularly those that have laid down their lives for the cause of Christ. But to be clear, Paul isn't promoting martyrdom, though his words truly encourages persecuted Christians. Further, Paul isn't saying that he wants to escape from life. He knows that his life, even through suffering, is filled with joy and fruitful labor. It's not escape that he's emphasizing; it's eternal enjoyment. Paul says that in death there's *more* of what satisfies him *now*. The "now" is incredible because it's about serving Jesus which brings meaning and joy. But he knows that the "later" is better because it involves face-to-face communion with Christ (1 Jn 3:1-3).

This outlook truly made Paul unstoppable, and I suppose aggravating to his opponents! You can imagine the conversations from the guards:

Guards: "Hey Paul, we don't like you and your Messiah. We're going to kill you."

Paul: "That'd be great! To die is gain! Bring it on!"

Guards: "On second thought, we're going to allow you to live."

Paul: "Fantastic! To live means fruitful, joyous labor!"

Guards: "Well, we're going to let you live, but we're going to make you suffer."

Paul: "Hey guys, I consider the sufferings of this present world not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed. It would fill me with joy to suffer for the Name!"

Do you see the power of this perspective? Kill me? I'll be with Christ. Let me live? I'll live for Christ. Make me suffer? I'll experience joy and get rewarded by Christ. This is the unstoppable mentality of the Apostle Paul, and it can be ours as well – *if we treasure Christ above all things*.

In verses 12-26, you can't miss the Christ-centered passion of Paul. It's all about Jesus – rejoicing in Jesus, relying on Jesus, and representing Jesus. It makes me think of the oft-quoted prayer of St. Patrick, who represented and relied on Jesus in the fifth century, as an evangelist to Ireland:

As I arise today,
may the strength of God pilot me,
the power of God uphold me,
the wisdom of God guide me.
May the eye of God look before me,
the ear of God hear me,
the word of God speak for me.
May the hand of God protect me,
the way of God lie before me,
the shield of God defend me,
the host of God save me.
May Christ shield me today.
Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me, Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit,
Christ when I stand,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.
Amen

That's a Christ-centered prayer, and that would be a Christ-centered life. Is this your ambition?

The Christian's Vision: Being with Christ (1:22-26)

Paul continues to open up his heart to the Philippians, as he allows them to hear how he's processing his situation. It's truly a win-win situation. To live means to honor Christ with fruitful labor, and to die means possessing Christ in the fullest sense. He found a love greater than life itself, and this vision of being with Christ inspired him to endure. Let's consider it in three parts.

His Dilemma (22-23a)

Paul is torn between the options. He says:

Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. I am pressured by both. (1:22-23a)

Paul's rhetorical question demonstrates the value of both options. This is why he is "torn" or "pressured," (23). This is an interesting term. It's used in a variety of ways to convey strong feelings, like the pressure of crowds, the controlling power of a fever or fear (Lk 8:45, 4:38, 8:37), and being "controlled by love" (2 Cor 5:14).

The Christian shares in this dilemma. We know that life is about fruitful, meaningful, and joyful labor. But we know that death is better. That's why it's a win-win situation. It's like saying, "Would you like a filet or a rib-eye?"

His Desire (23b)

Paul states his ultimate preference saying:

I have the desire to depart and be with Christ —which is far better —(23b)

Why did he prefer to die? It meant being with Christ, and that was better.

Notice that Paul doesn't mention his desire for reward, but for Christ Himself, who is the ultimate reward. To die means more of Christ – more of a complete, close, and intimate relationship with Him.

When I (Francis) go out of town, even if it's to Hawaii, without my wife, Lisa, I will feel like something is missing. Hawaii isn't my home. And I am always ready to come home to be with her. That's the way you feel when you're in love. Paul couldn't wait to see Jesus.

I often hear people talk about heaven apart from Christ. That's not what Paul envisions. When he thought about death, he thought about being in the presence of Christ (cf., 2 Cor 5:8).

And there are some who never desire heaven because we've built a pretty comfortable life right here.

The word for "depart" used here was a nautical term in Greek literature, used to describe a ship setting loose its mooring. Death is not an enemy for the Christian. Death is like a boat; it takes you where you want to go.

This past year my wife (Kimberly) and I (Tony) went on a cruise to celebrate our ten-year anniversary. It was my first cruise, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. One of my favorite memories relates to this idea of departing. As we set off from Ft. Lauderdale you could see the lights in the distance, slowly fading away. Then we were in the dark, and soon, we would go to bed. The next morning, however, was stunning. We had a room with a window, and I looked out and saw the amazing blue waters of the Caribbean and this beautiful island.

Death is kind of like this. The person dying has the lights slowly fading away, and then is gone. But the best is yet to come. For when the Christian dies, he or she will awake and see something more glorious than the Caribbean. They will see the risen, glorious Galilean! They will experience the glory of God in a way that they have never experienced it.

Paul knew death was better, but not just better – better by far! It's far better in every way, from your new body, to the new heavens and the new earth, and most of all because you will dwell with the Savior. Do you want to be with Him?

Many love songs have this idea of wanting to be with someone. Often, they exaggerate what a spouse can do for them, by looking for what only Christ can give them. Consider the following country song from Trisha Yearwood. I think if you deleted a few words, and substituted Christ for "you," it would actually make a decent worship song!

How do I get through one night without you
If I had to live without you
What kind of life would that be
Oh and I, I need you in my arms
Need you to hold
You're my world, my heart, my soul
If you ever leave
Baby, you would take away everything good in my life

Without you there'd be no sun in my sky
There would be no love in my life
There'd be no world left for me
And I, baby I don't know what I would do
I'd be lost if I lost you
If you ever leave
Baby, you would take away everything real in my life
And tell me now

How do I live without you
I want to know
How do I breathe without you
If you ever go
How do I ever, ever survive
How do I, how do I
Oh, how do I live

Minus the “baby” reference, and some of the sentimentality, we could ask of Christ, “How do we live without you?” We would certainly be lost without Him, who does give us breathe, who alone can stop the sun, and who tells us and shows us what is good and real.

I don’t mean to pick on Trisha Yearwood. It’s a nice song and she’s very gifted. She’s simply writing a love song like others write love songs. We’re made for relationships, so it makes sense to write songs like this. But there’s a relationship that supersedes all of your relationships, a love like no other. And if you know Christ personally, then you can look at death and say that it is better than life because it means “being with Christ.” Do you long for this?

Soon the war will be over, and we will see Him. We will be with Him. Endure with hope, Christian.

His Decision (25-26)

Even though Paul knew that Christ’s eternal presence was better, he resolved to live out his days for the sake of the church. He writes:

but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. (1:24-26)

Even though Paul knows that death is better, he decides that he should stay for the benefit of the body of Christ.

He doesn’t tell us why he has this confidence. On a human level, perhaps he knew that Rome had no real reason to punish him (Melick, 86). From a spiritual perspective, he believed God had more work for him to do. There was a necessary and unfinished task, and part of that involved laboring for the progress and joy of the Philippians (25), and their boasting in Christ (26). He must do these things before going to be with Christ. With this in mind, let me ask you four questions, with the first three coming out of verses 24-26, aimed at believers.

Are you serving others? (24) Paul says that it is “necessary” for the Philippians that he stay alive. Think about this. Is it necessary for you to stay at your church? If you left, would people really miss you? Please understand, Paul isn’t saying that the whole world will fall apart if he leaves; and the world wouldn’t fall apart if we left either. Jesus is Lord over His church. We believed in the sovereignty of God. But I’m asking the question with the body analogy that’s often used regarding the church. If you take off my arm, I’m going to miss it! If you take my ear, I will miss it! Paul could say that the church needs him, and the church needs everyone in the body doing their part. The question is “Are you serving?” If you get a job transfer, would people in your group, your neighborhood, or your church say, “We really miss them.” Sadly, some people give the church a bad name with their sin, and it would improve their witness if they

weren't present anymore. Paul says, "I'm going to stay and serve. That's why I'm living." Can you say this?

Are you serving for the progress and joy of others? (25) Hanson points out that the words *progress* and *joy* are united by the same preposition, and are both modified by the phrase in the faith (Hanson, 91). He adds, "real progress in the faith will result in genuine joy in the faith" (Ibid). In other words, these two go together: progress in the faith and joy in the faith (cf., Rom 15:13). This is why Paul wants to stay on planet earth, so people can grow in their faith and grow in their joy. He says something similar to the Corinthians:

Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith. (2 Cor 1:24)

What a wonderful way to think about ministry: striving for so that others may rejoice in all that is theirs in Christ. Can you identify with this mission? Do you think about living daily for the benefit of others' progress and for the increase of their joy? This is another way we make much of Jesus.

Are you serving so that others may boast in Christ? The ultimate purpose of Paul's reunion with the Philippians had to do with their boasting in Christ, "so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again." (1:25-26). Through his ministry, he wants them to make much of Jesus.

Put this together. What's life about? It's about fruitful labor. What does that mean? It means doing our part. It means helping people grow in their faith. It means helping people have more joy in Christ. It means ministering that others to glorify Jesus more and more. That's why Paul wanted to stay around a little longer. He was willing to postpone ultimate joy, for the joy of serving others.

How can you have this life? How can you have a life filled with meaning like this – to honor Christ by rejoicing in Christ, relying on Christ, and representing Christ? And how can you have a death like this – to die with the great joy of knowing you will forever be with Christ? How did Paul get this passion? He actually tells us in Philippians 3:

If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Phil 3:4b-11)

Paul met Jesus and was changed. He was previously a religious person – an extremely religious person – but he didn't know Christ. But when we traded religion for the righteousness of Jesus, and the new life that Jesus gives, he found life. Consequently, everything else was inferior to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ.

This is the good news. If you don't have meaning in life, and if you don't have this outlook on death, grace is available to you in the person of Jesus Christ, who came to us, as Philippians 2 says, and humbled himself. He died the death we deserved, paying the penalty for sinners, like us, and then rose on our behalf, and is now reigning over all things. And he says, "There is a righteousness that depends on faith not works... my righteousness... Turn away from your own efforts and trust Me alone, and I will forgive you, give you my righteousness, and change your current passion and your eternal destiny."

Everyone wants to live, and everyone will die. But there's only one way to have a life worth living and a death worth dying, and that is to look to the One who conquered death, the One Paul desired to see above all things. If you see Him as He is, you too will say "to be with Christ is far better."