

# Philippians 1:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

## Analysis

**For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain** (Ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος, *Emoi gar to zēn Christos kai to apothanein kerdos*)—One of Scripture's most compact, profound statements. To *zēn* ("to live," present infinitive) is not mere existence but conscious living is Christ (Χριστός, *Christos*). Life's meaning, purpose, content, and identity = Christ. Paul doesn't say living for Christ but living is Christ—union mysticism.

**To die is gain** (τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος, *to apothanein kerdos*)—*kerdos* ("gain, profit") is commercial language Paul uses frequently (3:7-8). Death gains unmediated Christ-presence (v. 23). This verse demolishes fear of death and purposeless living. If life = Christ, suffering/death can't steal meaning. If death = gain, martyrdom isn't loss. Both outcomes win.

## Historical Context

Greco-Roman philosophy (especially Stoicism and Epicureanism) debated death's nature—annihilation or soul-survival. Paul's confidence wasn't philosophical speculation but resurrection faith rooted in Christ's resurrection. His 'gain' is not disembodied bliss but waiting for resurrection (3:20-21). Ancient martyrs' fearlessness stemmed from this theology, shocking executioners.

## Related Passages

**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

## Study Questions

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1. Can you complete the sentence 'For me to live is \_\_\_\_' honestly? Is it Christ, or comfort, achievement, family?
2. How does viewing death as 'gain' (not loss) reshape your daily fears and choices?
3. What practical difference does it make to say life *is* Christ versus living *for* Christ?

## Interlinear Text

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ἐμοὶ	γὰρ	τὸ	ζῆν	Χριστὸς	καὶ	τὸ	ἀποθανεῖν	κέρδος
to me	For	G3588	to live	is Christ	and	G3588	to die	is gain
G1698	G1063		G2198	G5547	G2532		G599	G2771

## Additional Cross-References

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**Galatians 2:20** (References Christ): I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

**2 Corinthians 5:8** (Parallel theme): We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

**2 Corinthians 5:1** (Parallel theme): For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

**Philippians 1:23** (References Christ): For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

**Colossians 3:4** (References Christ): When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

**2 Corinthians 5:6** (Parallel theme): Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

**Revelation 14:13** (Parallel theme): And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

**Philippians 1:20** (References Christ): According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

**Galatians 6:14** (References Christ): But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

**1 Corinthians 1:30** (References Christ): But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: