

A To live for Christ or to die for Christ?

❖ Christ exalted in Paul (Philippians 1:10-20, 25-26)

- Paul rejoiced in the sufferings he endured, which were many (Col. 1:24a; 2 Cor. 11:23-27). Of course, he did not rejoice in the suffering itself, but in the reasons for which he endured hardships, one of which was the benefit it brought to the church of Christ (Col. 1:24b; 2 Cor. 11:28).
- By imitating Jesus in his suffering—and even in his death—Christ was exalted in Paul (Phil. 1:20 NIV).
- In his letter to the Philippians, Paul makes it clear that, for the moment, he did not expect to exalt Jesus with his death, but hoped, through the prayers of the church and the work of the Holy Spirit, to be freed and continue serving Christ with his life (Phil. 1:19, 25-26).
- Because of the evil that prevails in our world, living as Christ lived often involves suffering as Christ suffered and, in some cases, dying as Christ died (2 Tim. 3:12).

❖ To live or to die for Christ (Philippians 1:21-22)

- The root of all suffering lies in the cosmic battle being waged today between good and evil, between Christ and Satan.
- This is a spiritual war, which must be fought with spiritual weapons. The enemy's followers use weapons that are illicit against Christians (lies, criticism, peer pressure, etc.).
- But we use weapons like truth and justice (2 Cor. 6:4-7). Powerful weapons “to demolish strongholds”. (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
- But what happens when, in battle, the result is the death of the righteous? According to Paul, this results in a gain for us (Phil. 1:21).
- For those of us who are faithful to Christ, death places us beyond the reach of the enemy, and relieves us of all affliction (Pr. 14:32; Is. 57:1).

❖ Paul's dichotomy (Philippians 1:23-24)

- Although he could not make the decision, Paul is torn between two possibilities (Phil. 1:23-24): To depart and to be with Christ; or to remain and to benefit the church.
- Taking this text in isolation, we can deduce that Paul teaches that as soon as we die we ascend to Heaven to be with Jesus, contradicting other biblical passages (Eccl. 9:5; Ps. 6:5).
- In the same letter to the Philippians he says that, to be fully with Christ, one must wait for the moment of the resurrection (Phil. 3:8-11).
- On another occasion, Paul compares the body to a tent that is destroyed (dies) in order to be clothed with immortality (2 Cor. 5:1-4). However, he clarifies that this clothing occurs at the Second Coming, and not at the moment of death (1 Cor. 15:42, 51-54).

B What does it mean to live for Christ?

❖ Behave in a way worthy of the gospel (Philippians 1:27a)

- The expression “your conduct” is the translation of the Greek word *politeuomai*, which means “to live as citizens.” Paul urges the Philippians (and all of us) to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of citizens of Heaven (Phil. 3:20).
- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us how the citizens of Heaven should live.
- Paul uses this advice as an introduction to a topic that concerned him: unity in the church.
- He knew that disunity often stems from pride and inappropriate behavior towards one another. Therefore, he urges us to conduct ourselves in a dignified manner.

❖ To fight united for the gospel (Philippians 1:27b-30)

- Being righteous and upright does not guarantee a life without conflict (Phil. 1:30). On the contrary, Job himself, who was declared by God to be “he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8), suffered a terrible conflict, the work of the enemy.
- In the war in which we are engaged, unity plays an important role. Paul urges us to fight together to defend the gospel (Phil. 1:27b).
- This unity of purpose must be joined with prayer and the study of the Word (Eph. 6:18; Phil. 2:16).
- When we come into conflict with evil, we must not be intimidated by those who oppose us (Phil. 1:28). Let us remember that Satan is a defeated enemy, for Christ has already won the battle on the cross. (Luke 10:18; Col. 2:15).