

Who Is Jesus to You?

Philippians 1:21 (NASB 1995)

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

Introduction

I have a hobby of collecting last words people say on their deathbeds: ‘Nothing’ (one Buddhist monk). ‘Money’ (3X)—One rich man. I believe that the last words Paul the Apostle might have said was “Christ. Christ. Christ.” Christ meant everything to him.

Such weight of Christ in Paul’s life clearly revealed in the Letter to the Philippians. If I want to know and measure the importance of any message, I count the number of occurrences of a specific word. For instance, in his letter to the believers in Philippi, Paul repeated one word 35 times. That word is Christ. Besides two words, [‘I’ as in myself (63 times), and ‘you and you all’ (63 times)] this word appears the most (thanks to the Welsh’s who counted them for me).

It reveals that Christ was the focus in Paul’s life and ministry. Indeed, Christ was everything to him. Christ was his meaning, purpose, vision, Lord, and Savior. Christ was to live for. To die for. Every single ounce of his being cries out “Christ!” “Christ!” “Christ!”

Paul’s life was totally absorbed in Christ alone—from the first day of meeting Christ to the last day of dying for Him. He lived

1. A Surrendered Life (Acts 20:24): “I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself...”
2. A Focused Life (Acts 20:24): “... so that I may finish my course and the ministry...”
3. A Finished Life (2 Timothy 4:7–8): “I have fought... finished... kept...”

All for Christ. That was who Jesus was to Paul. Now, here’s a question for you.

Content

Who is Jesus to you? That may be the most important question you will ever answer. Some say Jesus is:

- A good moral teacher
- A miracle worker
- A historical figure

But the real question is not what people say. The real question is: **Who is Jesus to you—personally?**

This morning, we will look at one man's answer to that question—the Apostle Paul. And if anyone had a clear understanding of who Jesus is, it was Paul. Because his life was completely transformed by Christ. From persecutor... to preacher. From enemy... to servant.

So, who was Jesus to Paul? We can summarize it in three simple but powerful truths:

- Jesus was his **Savior**.
- Jesus was his **Lord**.
- Jesus was his **Life**.

1. Jesus was Paul's Savior

1 Timothy 1:15 — “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.”

Paul never forgot who he was before Christ. He was not a neutral person. He was not just “searching.” He was:

- A persecutor of the Church
- A man who opposed Christ
- A sinner, the worst of all sinners, in need of grace

And yet—Jesus saved him. He died for him and forgave his sins. Not because Paul deserved it. Not because Paul earned it. But because He loved him. But because of grace.

Grace That Rescues

Paul understood something very clearly (Ephesians 2:8-9):

Salvation is not something we achieve. It is something we receive. We cannot save ourselves—we need a Savior. Jesus came to save sinners. To die for them. To give His life as a ransom for sinners. That includes Paul. That includes us.

Illustration: A Pardon

Imagine a man on death row. He has no defense. No way out. And suddenly—he receives a full pardon. Not because of anything he did... but because someone else intervened. That inmate was Paul. That is us. We stand guilty—but Christ steps in.

Application

Let me ask you: Have you accepted Jesus as your Savior? Not just knowing about Him... but receiving His grace? Because everything begins here. Have you received His grace through repentance? Accept today His offer of forgiveness.

Transition

But Paul doesn't stop there. Because for Paul, salvation leads to surrender.

2. Jesus was Paul's Lord

Galatians 2:20 — “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...”

After meeting Jesus, Paul's life completely changed. When he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus, his first response was: “Lord... what do You want me to do?” From that moment on, Jesus was not just his Savior—He was his Lord.

What does that mean? It means:

- Jesus had authority over Paul's life
- Jesus directed his path (Acts 9:15-16)
- Jesus defined his purpose

Paul no longer lived for himself. He lived for Christ. Every minute of his life. Until he died.

Illustration: A Surrendered Life

Think of a soldier under command. He doesn't choose his own mission. He follows the orders of his commander. All the way. That is how Paul followed Christ. All the way.

Not Just Belief—Submission

Many people are comfortable with Jesus as Savior. But they struggle with Jesus as Lord. E.g., In 2013, a survey was done among over one thousand churchgoers, who attended church at least once a month. Although Christ commands His disciples to deny self, and take up own cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34), only one third of them agreed with the following statement, “A Christian must learn to deny himself/herself in order to serve Christ” (<https://research.lifeway.com/2013/12/02/study-obedience-not-easy-decision-for-believers/>).

They want forgiveness... but not authority. They want salvation... but not surrender. They want crown... but not cross. But Paul shows us: **You cannot separate the two.**

Application

So, let me ask you: Is Jesus your Lord? Or are you still in control?

- Your decisions
- Your priorities
- Your future

Are you following Him as Lord? Or you only seek Him at your convenience? Is Jesus truly leading your life—or are you still holding the controls?

Picture a man hiking alone along a narrow mountain trail. At one point, the ground gives way beneath him—and suddenly he’s hanging off the edge of a cliff, gripping a small branch with everything he’s got.

His heart is racing. His arms are shaking. He knows he can’t hold on forever. So, he cries out, “God! Please help me!” And then—he hears a voice from heaven, saying, “Did you call Me?” “Yes, Lord, I did,” replied the man. “Please hurry!” Then, the Lord said, “Let go of the branch.” The man couldn’t believe what he heard. “Lord, you don’t mean that.” The Lord said, “I mean it. Let go of the branch, and you shall live.” The man thought for a second, then, started crying out, “Is there... anyone else up there? Please help!”

Sometimes that’s exactly how we respond to God. We follow Jesus... but only if it makes sense to us. Only if it feels safe. Only if it doesn’t cost us. But calling Jesus “Lord” means trusting Him in every step of the way—even when it’s uncomfortable. Even when it requires surrender. Even when it doesn’t make sense.

A Savior forgives you. But a Lord leads you.

Transition

And when Jesus is both your Savior and your Lord... something deeper happens. He becomes your life.

3. Jesus was Paul's Life

Philippians 1:21 — “For to me, to live is Christ...”

This is one of the most powerful statements in the Bible. Paul doesn't just say:

- “I believe in Christ”
- “I follow Christ”

He says: **“Christ is my life.”**

What does that mean? It means: Christ is everything.

- Christ is his purpose.
- Christ is his identity.
- Christ is his motivation.
- Christ is his reward.

Everything Paul did flowed from Christ.

Illustration: A Branch and Vine

Jesus said: *“I am the vine; you are the branches”* (John 15:5). Imagine a branch lying on the ground, disconnected from the vine. It might look fine for a while—but it's lifeless. No growth. No fruit. No future.

But when that branch is connected to the vine—it lives. It grows. It bears fruit. Everything it needs flows from the source. Paul was the branch. Jesus was the vine. His purpose came from Christ. His strength came from Christ. His joy—even in suffering—came from Christ. His hope came from Christ.

A Christ-Centered Life

Paul preached Christ. He suffered for Christ. He lived for Christ. Everything he did was to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). He was ready to be bound for Christ. He was willing to die for the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 21:13). And even death, he said, would be gain—because it meant being with Christ.

How was this possible? Because Paul's old self was dead. He was living a new life in Christ. He confessed: *"I have been crucified with Christ; **and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me**"* (Galatians 2:20). Only a new creation in Christ can live for Christ.

Application

Let me ask you: Is Christ part of your life? Or is He your life? There is a difference.

- Part of your life = one priority among many
- Your life = everything revolves around Him

Conclusion

So, who was Jesus to Paul? He was:

- His **Savior** — the One who rescued him
- His **Lord** — the One who led him
- His **Life** — the One who defined everything

Final Challenge

What about you? Is Jesus only your Savior? Or is He also your Lord? And beyond that— **Can you say Christ is my life?**

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, Thank You for saving us by Your grace. Help us not only to receive You as Savior, but to follow You as Lord. And teach us to live in such a way that we can truly say: "To live is Christ." In Jesus' name, Amen.