

# Life and Death



## SABBATH—JANUARY 10

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Philippians 1:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 10:3–6; Philippians 1:21–24; Philippians 1:27.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Christ [Jesus] is everything that I live for. If I die, that will be even better for me” (Philippians 1:21, EASY).



**Paul could reach more people and places with his letters than he could visit in his lifetime.**

**PEOPLE OFTEN SAY** that death is a natural part of life. That's a lie. Death and life are completely different. Death is the “enemy” of life. Death is no more “built” into life than wrecked car parts are built into a brand new car. Paul says that Jesus died to “destroy the Devil. It is the Devil who has power over death. Before, we were like [the same as] slaves all our lives because we were afraid of death. But now, Jesus' death makes us free” (Hebrews 2:14, 15, EASY).

Paul was ready to die for Jesus. Paul knew what would happen in the future. For now, while he was in jail, the most important thing for Paul was to honor Jesus. Paul wanted to preach the Good News to as many people as possible. Maybe that's one reason why Paul wrote so many letters in the Bible. Paul could reach more people and places with his letters than he could visit in his lifetime.

Life is short. We must work for God's kingdom while we can. We understand that peace with other people is important. As church members, we must agree on our beliefs. When we agree about them, we will have peace in the church. As we shall see this week, Paul wrote to the Philippians about why our working together for peace in our church was so important to Jesus.

**HONORING JESUS MORE AND MORE  
(Philippians 1:19, 20)**

**Read Philippians 1:19, 20. What does Paul expect will happen to him when he goes to court? What does he think is more important than getting out of jail?**

Paul compared his suffering to the experience of other Christians: “I have been in prison more often than they have. People have hit me with whips very many times. I have nearly died many times. At five different times, the Jewish leaders punished me with whips. Each time they hit me 39 times. Three times the Romans punished me with sticks. People threw stones at me to kill me once [one time]. Three times I have been on ships that broke in the sea. Once [one time] I was in the sea for a night and a day. I have traveled on many journeys. I have been in danger from rivers and also from robbers. I have been in danger from my own people and also from Gentiles [non-Jews]. I have been in danger in cities and also in the wilderness [desert]. I have been in danger on the sea. I have been in danger from false believers [false Christians]. I have worked very hard, and I have been in pain. Many times I have not slept. I have often been hungry and thirsty. Many times I have had no food. I have often been cold and without enough clothes” (2 Corinthians 11:23–27, EASY). Paul adds, “But also, every day I have trouble in my mind. I worry about the believers in all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28, EASY).

**How does Paul stay in touch with the churches he set up? How does Paul stay in touch with the people he won for Jesus? Read 1 Corinthians 4:14–16; 1 Thessalonians 2:10, 11; Galatians 4:19; and Philemon 10 for the answers.**

Jesus gave everything He had to save us. In the same way, Paul tells church members, “I am happy to give everything I have for you. I will even give myself for you” (2 Corinthians 12:15, ERV). The more we live as Jesus lived, the less some other people may love us. That’s why Paul warns us: “Every Christian who wants to live in a way that pleases God will have trouble from other people” (2 Timothy 3:12, EASY). But when we are willing to suffer for our faith, our lives show Bible truth in the most powerful way (compare Philippians 1:7). “Paul was patient and cheerful in jail. His courage and faith were a powerful sermon.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 464, adapted.



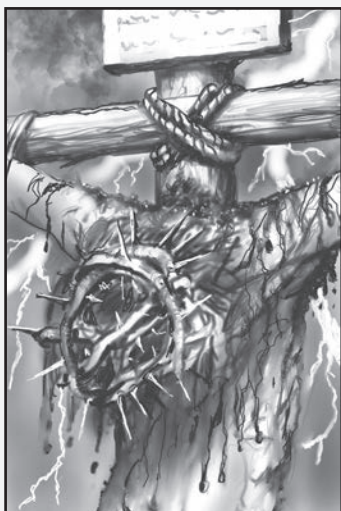
**“Three times I have been on ships that broke in the sea.”**

**TO DIE IS A BLESSING (2 Corinthians 10:3–6)**

As Christians, we are part of the worldwide war between good and evil. This war is happening all around us. The fight happens in us, too. We are part of this fight every day of our lives. We will be part of this fight until the day we die.

**Why do we fight this war? What weapons do we use in this fight? Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–6 for the answer.**

The most powerful spiritual weapons are ideas, both good and bad. Satan uses false ideas to trick people. Satan's "weapons" also include mean and nasty words, breaking trust and promises, shame, fear, and many other bad things. Christians should not use any evil thing to hurt other people. We must use love, mercy, peace, a gentle heart, being patient and kind, and self-control. Our most powerful weapon is the Bible. We must use the Bible wisely. The Holy Spirit will help us (Ephesians 6:17, 18). Only God can cause someone to believe Bible truth. We are just His messengers. God uses us to help Him do His work.



**Jesus won this fight for us at the cross.**

**Read Philippians 1:21, 22. What do these verses mean? How does this Bible truth help us to better understand the worldwide war between God and Satan?**

The worldwide war is a spiritual fight between God and Satan. We live in a war of ideas and beliefs. Jesus won this fight for us at the cross. As long as we stay connected to Jesus, we can't lose. Even if someone kills us, God will wake us up from the dead at the Second Coming. Paul accepted whatever happened to himself here on earth. Paul trusted his life to God. The Lord was Paul's judge in the court in heaven. Paul trusted God to make a fair decision about his life. So, Paul didn't worry about the future.

As Christians, we shouldn't fight so much for what we believe that people "owe" us. We should fight for what is right. Also, we should obey God in everything. The only way we can win in the war against evil is to obey God. Of course, Jesus is our example. He obeyed God in everything. Paul will talk more about this topic in Philippians 2.

**How is the worldwide war between good and evil happening in your life right now? Jesus won the fight against evil. How does this Bible truth give you hope?**

**TRUSTING IN GOD’S PROMISES (Philippians 1:21–24)**

**Read Philippians 1:21–24. What does Paul mean when he says, “If I die, that will be even better for me” (Philippians 1:21, EASY)?**

Many people misunderstand Philippians 1:21–24. In these verses, Paul compares living with dying. The Christian lives for Jesus and may even die for Him. If we die for Jesus, that is “even better” for us. When people see that we are ready to die for Jesus, our death is a powerful sermon about our faith (Philippians 1:21).

So, Paul isn’t saying that he will go to heaven right away when he dies. When we die, we no longer know anything. The dead rest in the grave until Jesus wakes them up (read Ecclesiastes 9:5 and John 5:28, 29). That’s why after Lazarus died, Jesus said, “ ‘Our friend Lazarus is sleeping. But I will go there to wake him up’ ” (John 11:11, EASY).

What if people went to heaven right away when they died? Imagine in your mind how that would be for poor Lazarus: After four happy days in heaven, an angel comes to Lazarus with the “bad” news. “Sorry, Lazarus. But Jesus is asking you to come back to earth. You can’t stay here!”

This story may seem a little silly, right? But it helps us see why the idea is so wrong that the dead go to heaven when they die. Death is the same as a sleep without any dreams. Jesus will wake His followers up from this sleep at the Second Coming. Then Jesus will take them to heaven, along with His followers who are alive on the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Also, Paul says, “As for me, it is nearly time for me to die. My death will be like [the same as] a drink offering that they pour out to God. My life as God’s servant will end” (2 Timothy 4:6, EASY). “Then by God’s grace [mercy] I will rise [wake up] from the dead” (Philippians 3:11, NIV). Then Jesus will take Paul, along with all God’s people, to the home God made for them in heaven (John 14:3; 1 Corinthians 2:9).

Paul was ready to die for Jesus. But he knew that his staying alive would be better for the Philippians than his death (Philippians 1:24). Is it better for us to live for Jesus or to die for Him? This question isn’t easy to answer. Paul said, “I can’t decide between the two” choices (Philippians 1:23, NIV). Both choices “seem very good to me” (Philippians 1:23, EASY).



**The dead rest in the grave until Jesus wakes them up.**



## STAND STRONG TOGETHER IN ONE SPIRIT (Philippians 1:27)

Jesus' last prayer for His followers was about peace in the church. Jesus prayed: " 'Father, I want those [people] you have given me to be with me where I am. I want them to see my glory [honor], the glory you have given me. You gave it to me because you loved me before the world [planet earth] was created [made]' " (John 17:24, NIV). Jesus also asked His Father, " 'Please keep them safe in your name. That is the powerful name that you gave to me. Then they can be united [joined together] in the same way that you and I are united' " (John 17:11, EASY). Jesus also talks about what will happen when His followers aren't united. When we don't agree, other people can use our ideas and behavior as a reason to not believe the Good News. Two times in His prayer in John 17, Jesus talks about our being united with Him and the Father. Jesus wants us to work together for peace with Them. " 'Then the world's people [the people on this earth] will believe that you sent me' " (John 17:21, EASY). And " 'the world's people will know that you sent me' " (John 17:23, EASY).



**Jesus' sermon in Matthew 5–7 tells us what it means to be children of God and members of God's kingdom.**

**Read Philippians 1:27. Compare this verse with John 17:17–19. What do both Jesus and Paul say we need to do to have peace in the church?**

In Philippians 1:27, the words written as "live . . . in a way that honors" come from the word "politeuomai" in the Greek language. These words mean to "live as a citizen [member]" of God's kingdom. Jesus' sermon in Matthew 5–7 tells us what it means to be children of God and members of God's kingdom. God's children have no pride in their hearts. They are gentle. They hunger and thirst for a holy life. They show mercy. Their hearts are clean and innocent. They make peace. They don't fight or hurt other people. They love their enemies. They bless the people who curse them. They do good things for the people who hate them. In short, they follow Micah 6:8: " 'You must be fair to other people,' God says. 'You must want to be kind. And you must be careful to do what I show you' " (Micah 6:8, EASY).

So often fighting in the church comes from pride. "When pride and love for this earth fill our hearts, the spirit of Jesus leaves. Then our fighting weakens the church."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, pages 240, 241, adapted.

**A CHURCH UNITED AND WITHOUT FEAR  
(Philippians 1:27–30)**

**Read Philippians 1:27–30. As a church, how does our working together in peace help us to share the Good News without any fear in our hearts?**

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Satan's plan is to separate us from each other. Then he can win the fight against us. Jesus said, " 'And if the people in one family start to fight against each other, they will destroy their own family' " (Mark 3:25, EASY). As God's end-time church, our work together in peace helps us to announce the Good News about Jesus (Revelation 12:17; Revelation 14:6). Jesus' prayer in John 17 teaches us that the Bible helps us to work together in peace (John 17:17, 19). As a church, we have a special message to share with everyone on earth in the end times. We need to work together to tell people about this special message from God. If we are united, we will have nothing to fear (Philippians 1:28). Satan is a loser. Jesus beat him at the cross. Even if we die for our faith, nothing can separate us from the love of God if we do what is right (Romans 8:36–39; 1 Peter 3:13). The devil can't stop Bible truth.

**Read the following Bible verses: Matthew 10:38; Acts 14:22; Romans 8:17; and 2 Timothy 3:12. What important topic do all of these verses talk about?**

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This earth is filled with sin. Life is hard, even for the "best" of us like Job. Job was a holy man. The Bible says that Job "was a good, honest man. He respected God and refused to do evil" (Job 1:1, ERV). But overnight, disaster hit Job and his family hard. Who hasn't learned, as Job did, that life on this earth is hard? You never know when bad things will happen. Everyone on this earth will suffer in one way or another. In the end, better for us to suffer for Jesus than for anything else.

**What hope do we as Christians have in our sufferings?**



**Overnight, disaster hit Job and his family hard.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** “At no other time in the church’s history have there been so many different gifts in the church. The church needed the gifts of the Holy Spirit to work together and keep peace in New Testament times. We need these same gifts so much more for our work together and peace today! The Bible clearly shows that God’s plan is to unite or join the members of His end-time church. The Bible promises us that church leaders shall agree with each other in the end times before Jesus comes back. Also, in the end times, God’s people who are wise will have understanding. Then God’s church will be joined together in peace, work, and faith. If we understand things correctly, then we will find ways to agree with each other. . . . We are waiting for this time of perfect peace to come into the church. We do not have this peace now. This time of peace in the church will happen in the future. So, the spiritual gifts that God gave us must continue to do their work until we are united.”—R. F. Cottrell, “Introduction,” in Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, page 140, adapted.



**“The Bible promises us that church leaders shall agree with each other in the end times before Jesus comes back.”**

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What needs to happen in the church today for the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with a spirit of peace to help us work together? God gives His church warnings and advice in the writings of Ellen G. White. How does following this advice help us to work together for peace in the church?
- ② Let’s say you have a friend who believes that Paul and other Christians who died are in heaven right now with Jesus. How would you explain the Bible teaching about death to this friend?
- ③ Why do people suffer in this life? How does the worldwide war between good and evil help us to understand the answer to this question? When we look to Jesus on the cross, we see the best example of God’s love for us. How does this example help us with our own suffering? Why, in the end, must we learn to trust God in the worst of times?

## PEACOCKS SAVE THE DAY!

**M**any cobras lived outside the Sunshine Children's Home and School in Bangalore, India. Cobras are snakes that have long teeth filled with poison. A cobra's bite can hurt and even kill. So Beulah Fernandez had good reason to be worried. Beulah was the manager of the Seventh-day Adventist home and school. Five years ago, a cobra bit a boy as the boy chased a baby cow across a mango grove. Mangoes are tropical fruit. The boy was rushed to the hospital. The doctors operated on him many times. The boy needed to take medicine for a whole year before he got well.

Now the baby cobras were everywhere on the 10-acres of land that belonged to the school. Baby cobras were in the garden, under the car, and even outside the door of Beulah's house.

Beulah prayed, "O Lord! Let this school and home be a safe place for children. Please help!"

Beulah paid snake-catchers to come remove the snakes. But the snake-catchers were used to catching snakes in city buildings and closed spaces. The snake-catchers had trouble finding the baby cobras on the big property that was filled with tropical fruit trees.

Teachers and students prayed with all their hearts.

Then a teacher saw a peacock arrive in the schoolyard. Could that really be a peacock? A peacock in the schoolyard in the middle of a big city? Peacocks liked to eat cobras and other snakes with long teeth filled with poison.

A short time later, another teacher saw a second peacock.

A few evenings later, the male peacock and his wife, a peahen, put on a royal show for the teachers and children. The shiny blue peacock opened all his beautiful long tail feathers, the same as a giant fan. The tip of each feather was marked with what looked the same as a big eye. The peacock shook his feathers as he walked around the yard. He was very pleased with himself.

After that the baby cobras disappeared.

The peacock and his wife continued to stay at the school to guard the teachers and children from snakes. To this day, someone will see one of the birds and shout, "Peacock!" And the children run to look at the bird because it was so beautiful and fancy.

In the 45-year history of the school and home, no peacocks visited the campus before. Beulah says, "We believe God sent the peacocks.

God really loves and cares for His children. He can amaze us with beautiful answers that solve all our troubles."

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INSIDE  
*Story*



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