LESSON 3 *January 10–16

(page 20 of Standard Edition)

Life *and* Death



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Phil. 1:19–30, 1 Cor. 4:14–16, 2 Cor. 10:3–6, John 17:17–19, Micah 6:8, Acts 14:22.*

Memory Text: **"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain"** *(Philippians 1:21, NKJV)***.**

Death, we're often told, is just part of life. That's a lie. Death is the opposite of life, the enemy of life. Death was no more built into life than wreckage was built into a car. Paul emphatically says that Christ died to "destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" *(Heb. 2:14, 15)*.

Although ready to die for Christ, Paul was confident of his long-term fate. The most important thing for him in the meantime was, by his own life or death, to honor Christ and to preach the gospel to as many as possible. Perhaps that is one reason we have so many epistles bearing his name. Through his writings, he could reach many people and places, including places that he himself had never visited.

Life is short, and it is vital to make the biggest impact possible for God's kingdom within the span of the years that God grants us. No small part of that impact has to do with our encouraging "the unity of the faith." As we shall see beginning this week, this theme was one important reason for Paul's writing to the Philippians.

** Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 17.*

"Christ Will Be Magnified"

Read Philippians 1:19, 20. What seems to be Paul's expectation as to the outcome of his trial? What does he consider even more important than being acquitted?

_____

_____

Although Paul was no criminal, this was not the first time that he had been imprisoned, and he was no stranger to persecution. To the Corinthians, he detailed his sufferings up to that time: "In prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" *(2 Cor. 11:23–27, NKJV)*.

But lest we think these sufferings were uppermost in his mind, Paul immediately adds, "besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" *(2 Cor. 11:28, NKJV)*.

Read 1 Corinthians 4:14–16; 1 Thessalonians 2:10, 11; Galatians 4:19; and Philemon 10. What relationship does Paul have with the churches he established and the people he won for Christ?

_____

_____

Like Jesus, who spared nothing to save us, Paul was willing to "spend and be spent" for the sake of fellow believers *(2 Cor. 12:15, NKJV)*. But, paradoxically, the more a person's actions resemble that of Jesus, the less they are loved or appreciated by some. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" *(2 Tim. 3:12)*. But faithful Christians remain perhaps the most powerful way to glorify God and to reveal the truth of the gospel *(compare Phil. 1:7)*. "Paul's patience and cheerfulness during his long and unjust imprisonment, his courage and faith, were a continual sermon."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 464.

Look at how you live and how you treat people, especially people who don't treat you nicely. What kind of witness for Jesus do you present?

To Die Is Gain

In case you have not noticed, we are all, as believers especially, involved in the great controversy, which rages all around us and, indeed, in us as well. We all, in one way or another, experience the reality of this cosmic struggle, and we will until the day we die, whenever or however that happens.

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3–6. What is the basis of the spiritual war we wage, and what are our weapons?

_____

_____

The most deadly spiritual weapons are ideas, good and bad. Satan uses criticism, betrayal, embarrassment, fear, peer pressure, and a host of similar tools that Christians should never employ. We are, instead, to use love, mercy, peace, gentleness, longsuffering, kindness, and self-control. Our most powerful weapon, judiciously used, is "the Word of God" wielded by the Spirit *(Eph. 6:17, AMP),* because only God can bring the truth home to a person's heart. We are merely the instrument that God uses to accomplish His purposes.

Read Philippians 1:21, 22. How do we understand Paul's point, especially in the context of the great controversy?

_____

_____

Because the battle is spiritual, we're in a war of ideas and values. Yet, Christ has won the victory at the cross for us, and as long as we stay connected to Him, we can never be defeated, even if we are killed. Paul surrendered his life to whatever happened to him here on earth, however unjust, because he entrusted his life and his future to a higher court.

As Christians, we should not fight so much for our rights as for what is right. It's not "might makes right," but "right makes might." Submission to God's will is honorable; in fact, it is the only way to be victorious in the war in which we find ourselves. Jesus, of course, is the quintessential example of submission to the will of God, as Paul will bring out in Philippians 2.

In what ways, right now, are you experiencing the reality of the great controversy? How can you draw comfort and strength from knowing that Christ has won the victory for us already?

Being Confident

Read Philippians 1:23, 24. What does Paul mean when he says that "to depart, and be with Christ" is "far better"?

_____

_____

This passage has been greatly misunderstood through the ages. In this week's passage for study, Paul dealt with the contrast between living and dying. The Christian lives for Christ and may even die for Him. In that sense it is "gain" because our witness is that much more powerful and persuasive *(Phil. 1:21)*. No doubt a person believes when willing to die for that belief.

But we must also recognize that the dead are really dead. They "know nothing." They rest in the grave till the resurrection *(see Eccl. 9:5; John 5:28, 29)*. That's why Jesus said of Lazarus, who had died, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" *(John 11:11)*.

If, when people die, they go immediately to heaven, imagine how that would be for Lazarus. After four days of Lazarus frolicking in Paradise, an angel comes with the "bad" news: "Sorry, Lazarus, but Jesus is calling you back to earth. You can't stay here."

When we follow error to its logical conclusion, we see how erroneous it is. Death is like a dreamless sleep from which Jesus will awaken His faithful followers at the Second Advent; then, together with the living saints, they will be caught up and taken to heaven to be with Jesus forever *(see 1 Thess. 4:16, 17)*.

Paul's "departing" from the present life to be with Christ means to be with Him in suffering and dying *(2 Tim. 4:6)* in order to "attain to the resurrection from the dead" *(Phil. 3:11, NKJV)*. Also, he was no doubt aware that he would close his eyes in death and that the very next thing he would know, in the twinkling of an eye, would be seeing Jesus, who would take him, with all God's people, to the place Jesus has prepared for all who love Him *(John 14:3, 1 Cor. 2:9)*.

Though willing to die for Christ, Paul knew it would be better for the Philippians if he would "remain in the flesh" *(Phil. 1:24, NKJV)*. Interestingly, for the Christian, whether it is better to live for Christ or die for Him is not necessarily easy to answer. Paul was "hard-pressed between the two" *(Phil. 1:23, NKJV)*, between staying alive or resting in the grave.

Again, however much no one wants to die, have you ever thought about how the moment you die, the next thing you will know is the return of Christ? How might that thought help you understand Paul's thinking here?

Stand Fast in Unity

Jesus' last prayer for His disciples was dominated by one key theme: unity. Jesus looked beyond the cross to reunion with His Father *and* reunion with us: "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me" *(John 17:24, NKJV)*. Jesus prayed that the Father would keep His children so "that they may be one as We are" *(John 17:11, NKJV)*. He also underscored the dire consequences of disunity—it becomes a reason for many not to believe. Twice in this brief prayer, Jesus emphasizes our oneness with Him and the Father is so "that the world may believe" and so "that the world may know that You have sent Me" *(John 17:21, 23, NKJV)*.

Read Philippians 1:27 and compare John 17:17–19. What do both Jesus and Paul say is indispensable for unity in the church?

_____

_____

The Greek word in Philippians 1:27 translated "let your conduct be worthy" is *politeuomai*, which means "live as a citizen"—not of any earthly kingdom but as a citizen of the heavenly kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount paints a beautiful picture of what it means to be children of the heavenly Father and members of His kingdom: poor in spirit, meek, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, turning the other cheek, loving one's enemies, blessing those who curse us, doing good to those who hate us. In short, "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" *(Micah 6:8)*.

It's difficult to be upset or angry with someone like that, or is it? Sometimes we resent people who seem to be too good. We may even be tempted to cut them down to size or find a weak point to prove that they're not as good as they seem, all so that we feel better about ourselves. Instead, why not see how much more loving we can be, how generous, how merciful, how humble?

Ellen G. White spoke of those who "love the world and its gain better than they love God or the truth."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 277.

So often disunity in the church ultimately stems from pride. "As pride and worldly ambition have been cherished, the spirit of Christ has departed, and emulation, dissension, and strife have come in to distract and weaken the church."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 240, 241.

How crucial that we each learn the humility and meekness that Jesus modeled for us! What a different church we would have, wouldn't we?

United and Fearless

Read Philippians 1:27–30. How does our unity and "striving together for the faith of the gospel" relate to fearlessness?

_____

_____

Satan's strategy is to divide and conquer. Disunity is deadly. Jesus said, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" *(Mark 3:25, NKJV)*. It's a simple principle that Satan is delighted for us to forget. Our unity helps enable us to fulfill our prophetic role as the remnant of Bible prophecy *(Rev. 12:17)*, proclaiming the "everlasting gospel" to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" *(Rev. 14:6)*. Because unity is crucial to fulfill our mission to spread this God-given message, and Jesus' prayer in John 17 highlights "the truth" of God's Word as one of the most important keys for unity *(John 17:17, 19)*, our message cannot be separated from our mission or our unity. All three stand or fall together. If one of these three keys is missing, we can't succeed. However, if we have all three in place, there is nothing to fear. We need not be "in any way terrified" by opposition *(Phil. 1:28, NKJV)*. Satan is a defeated foe. Even if we should be put to death for our faith, nothing can harm us if we "become followers of what is good" *(1 Pet. 3:13, NKJV)*. The devil is powerless to stop the onward march of God's truth.

Read the following Bible passages and briefly summarize their common theme: Matthew 10:38, Acts 14:22, Romans 8:17, 2 Timothy 3:12.

_____

_____

Life itself in this fallen world is hard, even for the "best" of us. Job was a righteous man; even the Bible says that he "was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil" *(Job 1:1, NKJV)*. And yet, overnight, calamity struck him and his family. Who hasn't learned, either by personal experience or by seeing what happened to others, that life here is lived, it seems, on a precipice, and you never know when you will go over the edge? Suffering, to some degree, is the lot of us all. In the end, though, better to suffer for Christ's sake than for anything else.

What hope, what comfort, should we, as Christians, have amid our suffering?

(page 26 of Standard Edition)

Further Thought: "From the rack, the stake, the dungeon, from dens and caves of the earth, there falls upon his ear the martyr's shout of triumph. He [Paul] hears the witness of steadfast souls, who, though destitute, afflicted, tormented, yet bear fearless, solemn testimony for the faith, declaring, 'I know whom I have believed.' These, yielding up their lives for the faith, declare to the world that He in whom they have trusted is able to save to the uttermost."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 512.

"Never was there so great a diversity of faith in Christendom as at the present day. If the gifts [of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers *(Eph. 4:11–13)*] were necessary to preserve the unity of the primitive church, how much more so to restore unity now! And that it is the purpose of God to restore the unity of the church in the last days, is abundantly evident from the prophecies. We are assured that the watchmen shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Also, that in the time of the end the wise shall understand. When this is fulfilled there will be unity of faith with all whom God accounts wise; for those that do in reality understand aright, must necessarily understand alike. . . . From considerations like these, it is evident that the perfect state of the church here predicted is still in the future; consequently these gifts have not yet accomplished their purpose."—R. F. Cottrell, "Introduction," in Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 140.

Discussion Questions:

❶ In light of the above quotation from R. F. Cottrell, what is necessary for the Holy Spirit to bring unity into God's church today? How important for church unity is the putting into practice of counsels given through the gift of prophecy?

❷ How would you explain the Bible teaching on death to a friend who believes that Paul and other Christians who have died are now "with Christ" in heaven?

❸ How do we understand the terrible reality of suffering in this world? Why is the great controversy motif so helpful in giving us some understanding of it all? Why though must we, in the end, ultimately look at Jesus on the cross as the fullest possible expression of the Father's love and learn to trust Him even in the worst of times?

INSIDE *Story*

Peacocks to the Rescue!

An outbreak of baby cobras alarmed Beulah Fernandez, director of Sunshine Children's Home and School on a Seventh-day Adventist campus in Bangalore, India. She had good reason to be worried. Five years earlier, a boy had been bitten by a cobra while chasing a calf through a mango grove. Even though he had been rushed to the hospital, he had ended up undergoing several operations and a year of complicated treatments before recovering.

Now baby cobras seemed to be everywhere on the 10-acre campus: on the road, in the garden, under the car, and even outside the door of Beulah's house.

"O Lord!" she prayed. "This is supposed to be a safe place for children. Please help!"

Snake catchers were called, but they were accustomed to catching snakes in city buildings and closed spaces.

It was a difficult task to find the baby cobras on the large campus of trees bearing mangos, bananas, jackfruit, sapota, papaya, custard apples, avocados, coconuts, guavas, figs, passion fruits, and soursop.

Staff members and children prayed earnestly.

Then a staff member spotted a peacock on the campus. Could it be? A peacock on the campus in the middle of a big city? Peacocks are known to eat venomous snakes.

A short time after that, another staff member saw a second peacock.

A few evenings later, staff members and children were treated to a majestic display of a peacock and his female counterpart, a peahen, majestically strutting around the garden.

Everyone watched in wonder as the shiny blue peacock fanned out its long, brilliant tail feathers marked with eye-like designs.

After that evening, the baby cobras disappeared.

Even though the snakes were gone, the peacock and peahen remained on the campus like stately guardians to the children and staff members.

Even today, someone screams out almost daily, "Peacock!"—and the children run out to look at a beautiful bird.

Beulah believes that the peacocks were the answer to their fervent prayers. In the 45-year history of the school and children's home, no peacocks had ever before visited the campus.

"We believe that God sent the peacocks," she said. "God indeed does love and care for His children and can still amaze us with beautiful solutions to all our troubles."

Your Sabbath School mission offerings support Seventh-day Adventist education around the world. Thank you for giving for mission.

Provided by the General Conference Office of Adventist Mission, which uses Sabbath School mission offerings to spread the gospel worldwide. Read new stories daily at AdventistMission.org.

Part I: Overview

Key Text: *Philippians 1:21*

Study Focus: *Phil. 1:19–30, 1 Thess. 4:14–16*

Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, "If a man hasn't discovered something he will die for, he isn't fit to live."—quoted in Mark Water, *The New Encyclopedia of Christian Quotations* (Alresford, Hampshire, England: John Hunt Publishers Ltd., 2000), p. 404. Paul expressed a similar sentiment, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" *(Phil. 1:21, NKJV)*. These are not empty words! Paul truly was willing to die for Christ *(Rom. 14:8)*, which he ultimately did *(2 Tim. 4:6–8)*.

Quoting from Psalm 44:22, Paul announced to the Lord, " 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter' " *(Rom. 8:36, NKJV)*. Thus, his words in Galatians 2:20 should not surprise us: " 'I have been crucified with Christ' " *(NKJV)*. Paul was willing to die for Christ because he was committed to living for Him. Paul continues, " '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' " *(Gal. 2:20, NKJV)*. Thus, Paul lived and died for the sake of the gospel.

This week's lesson emphasizes three major themes:

1. God summons us to live mission-minded lives, even calling us to be willing to die for Him.
2. Death is likened to sleep, for which the solution is the resurrection of the body, not the immortality of the soul.
3. Christ calls us to unity in His Spirit. Because we are all involved in a spiritual war, we must not only use the right weapons but also fight together in unity.

Part II: Commentary

Illustration

The story is told about John Bradford, who was burned to death at the stake on July 1, 1555. Bradford "was chaplain to King Edward Sixth of England, and was one of the most popular preachers of his day. But he was a martyr to his faith. As he was being driven out to Newgate to be burned, permission was given him to speak, and from the wagon in which he rode to his death the entire way out from West London to

Newgate he shouted: 'Christ, Christ, none but Christ.' "—Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Garland, TX: Bible Communications, Inc., 1996), p. 787. As did Paul, Bradford gave himself to mission by living and dying for Christ.

Living and Dying for Christ

Paul's statement in Philippians 1:21 is one of the most noteworthy in all his letters. His willingness to live for Christ—which implies enduring inevitable hardships—and even to die for Him, underscores the hope expressed in the preceding verse, "And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die" *(Phil. 1:20, NLT)*.

A puzzling concept, however, is Paul's assertion that dying is gain. What does he mean by that? How can one benefit from his or her own death? Based on Paul's desire, expressed in Philippians 1:23, "to depart and be with Christ" *(NKJV)*, some have inferred that Paul is affirming that he would be in the presence of Christ immediately after death. But such a notion contradicts plain scriptural teachings about the non-immortality of the soul and death as a slumber. To understand what Paul meant by referring to death as gain, it is helpful to examine his use of the term "gain" (from the Greek *kerdos*) and its cognate verb "to gain" (from the Greek *kerdainō*), elsewhere in his writings. In Philippians 3:7, 8, Paul mentions that what he previously considered as gain (*kerdos*), he now counts as loss "*because of* Christ" *(Phil. 3:7, NRSV, emphasis added)*; that is, "*because of* the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus" *(Phil. 3:8, NRSV, emphasis added)*. Paul further explains, "*Because of* him I have suffered the loss of all things . . . so that I may gain [*kerdainō*] Christ" *(Phil. 3:8, CSB)*. Thus, for Paul, dying is gain in the sense that he will ultimately gain Christ by seeing Him at His second coming *(2 Tim. 4:8)*.

It is also possible that "gain" (*kerdos*) in Philippians 1:21 has a missionary sense. In 1 Corinthians 9:19–23, Paul uses *kerdainō* as a missionary term: "I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win [*kerdainō*] the more; . . . to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win [*kerdainō*] Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win [*kerdainō*] those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law . . . that I might win [*kerdainō*] those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win [*kerdainō*] the weak" *(NKJV)*.

In that regard, the following comment on Philippians 1:21 is helpful: "[Paul] is concerned with magnifying Christ. If his Lord saw best for him to bear testimony through living and ministering, he would rightly represent Him. But the death of a righteous man can also be a powerful affirmation of the efficacy of the gospel of grace. The contrast between

his death and the death of one who dies without hope would be so marked that its influence would bring *gain for the kingdom of Christ. Hearts are touched and softened* by the calm assurance and confidence of the one whose trust is completely in his God, even in the hour of death."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 147, emphasis added. Paul believed that his death would mark the culmination of his missionary work *(Phil. 2:17; compare with 2 Tim. 4:6, 7)*. Also, he likely thought that giving his life would "encourage the Philippians to further self-sacrifice, or . . . might cause some to investigate the faith to which he held so tenaciously."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 160.

Paul viewed death as gain because he would see Christ in his next conscious experience at the resurrection. At the same time, Paul was also certain that between his death and the Second Coming, he would be sleeping in the tomb.

Death Is Like a Sleep

Paul compared death to sleep *(1 Thess. 4:14, 15)*, suggesting a state of unconsciousness. This idea aligns with Jesus' teaching in the Gospels *(Luke 8:52, 53; John 11:11–13)*. One clear example is the story of the resurrection of Jairus's daughter. Interestingly, while Matthew and Mark mention only that people ridiculed Jesus' affirmation that the girl was sleeping *(Matt. 9:24; Mark 5:39, 40)*, Luke's observation as a physician is more precise: "And they ridiculed him, *knowing that she was dead*" *(Luke 8:53, NKJV, emphasis added)*. Additionally, the book of Acts—also written by Luke—portrays the death of Stephen by affirming, "he fell asleep" *(Acts 7:60, NKJV)*. The same is said about David *(Acts 13:36)*.

Referring to the death of "the fathers," Peter says they "fell asleep" *(2 Pet. 3:4, NKJV)*. Scholars debate whether by "the fathers" Peter meant the previous generation of Christians or the patriarchs, but this distinction is irrelevant. Whatever the case is, death is depicted as a state of unconsciousness, similar to what happens when we fall asleep every night. It is also noteworthy that "many bodies of the saints *who had fallen asleep* were raised" at Jesus' resurrection *(Matt. 27:52, NKJV, emphasis added)*. This passage in the Gospel of Matthew is important, not only because it likens death to sleep but also because it clearly points to the resurrection of the body as the remedy for death.

As noted previously, Paul's belief that death is likened to sleep is deeply rooted in Jesus' teachings and aligns with the thought expressed by other apostles. Thus, the Bible does not portray death as a state of consciousness, as many think.

Unity in Christ

Philippians 1:27 begins a section in the letter *(Phil. 1:27–30)* in which Paul shifts from discussing his own suffering to the suffering of his audience in their work for Christ. Two crucial themes emerge in Philippians 1:27: a Christlike manner of life and unity. Believers are called to display outstanding conduct and remain united, despite the hard-hearted opposition and suffering that they face for their faith in Christ.

Paul uses two key phrases to highlight the type of connection that should characterize the relationship among believers; that is, "one spirit" and "one mind" *(Phil. 1:27, NKJV)*. This language of companionship runs throughout the letter. In this context, Paul affirms that the Philippians would complete his joy "by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" *(Phil. 2:2, ESV)*. In Philippians 4:1–3, Paul hints that unity is crucial for the fulfillment of mission.

Philippians 4:3 presents four compound words introduced by the Greek particle *syn* ("with" or "together with"); *syzygos* ("yokefellow"); *syllambanō* (literally, "take together"); *synathleō* ("struggle along with"); and *synergos* ("fellow worker"). Thus, Paul mentions women who "labored with" *(NKJV)* him in the gospel and also "fellow workers" *(NKJV),* all of whom were involved in mission.

Part III: Life Application

Meditate upon the following themes. Then ask your students to answer the questions at the end of this section.

Jesus said, " 'A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master' " *(Matt. 10:24, NKJV)*. Among other things, this teaching includes rejection, suffering, and even martyrdom. In John 15:20, Jesus says, " ' "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" ' " *(NKJV)*. As workers in the cause of Christ, we are supposed to be prepared for hard times. The Bible reveals that Satan is working diligently in this world in order to prevent the gospel from being preached to all nations, tribes, languages, and peoples, for " 'he knows that he has a short time' " *(Rev. 12:12, NKJV)*. God's people must work diligently, too.

Thus, Christ summons us to live for mission. And if we die while engaged in our missionary task, we are assured that we will sleep in the tomb, awaiting the resurrection at the Second Coming. God does not forget those who die in faithfulness to the third angel's message. They are promised, " ' "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." ' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and

their works follow them' " *(Rev. 14:13, NKJV)*. For now, endurance is necessary *(Rev. 14:12)*. We are called to take up our cross and follow Christ *(Matt. 10:38)* until the day we will exchange the cross for the crown of life *(Rev. 2:10)*. Meanwhile, we must work together against a common enemy. Paul says, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but . . . against spiritual hosts of wickedness" *(Eph. 6:12, NKJV)*. United in Christ and clothed with the armor of God, we will overcome!

Questions:

1. **Think about a time when you suffered religious persecution. How did suffering for Christ's sake strengthen your faith?**

2. **To what mission has Christ called you? How are you fulfilling that work for Him?**