

"Paul's Letter to the Philippians – 'To Live AND to Die – Christ'"

Our Main Text Today:

Phil. 1:19-21

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

20 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.

21 For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain.

- ***The glory of what Paul has written here is so evident and clear. To live and to die, all for his eternal glory, yes, but also for our gain! This is simplicity indeed, but the details of it are unquestionably challenging. We all can fill in the blanks from our own life experience since we became Christians. The challenges of this life have been many . . . and we know they will continue to be challenging.***

But even a quick and superficial reading of the letter reveals how this letter can be of great assistance to us -- if only we will take to heart what the apostle has written here. Amen.

- ***You will recall from our last study how verse 19 fills in a very critical piece of the dynamic, as it were, of the Christian life and experience. For the Lord God has provided a special empowering that enabled Paul (and you and me as well) to endure all things for the sake of our Lord Jesus.***
- ***This is a very central theme of Paul's letters and there are so many places where he highlights this dynamic resource and the blessings of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ dwelling within each of us. He has become "a life giving spirit" and lives his life in each of us who know him.***

My goal today is to continue where we left off last time gaining from Paul's letter to the Philippians an understanding of what God's blessings under grace have provided for our living of this life as its is set before us all.

Review from Last Time:

- ***The apostle's concern for the Philippians was in the very "heart of Jesus Christ" and he had an empowering of the Lord as well which was worthy of proclamation.***

Phil. 1:8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

- ***Well, as we have seen already so clearly in our studies in Philippians, this word in verse 8 is central to Paul's message. So often translated "bowels" in the KJV, Paul intends in our contemporary English "inner affections" or "tender mercies". We all have experienced these and I am sure you know what I mean. But Paul is using this word here to even refer to the "heart" of our Lord Jesus Christ toward his own dear children!***
- ***We reviewed Paul's teaching of this and saw who the Spirit of Jesus Christ dwells within every one of us today, under grace:***

Phil. 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and **the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ**

1 Cor. 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam [was made] a quickening spirit.

Rom. 8:9-11

9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not **the Spirit of Christ**, he is none of his.

10 And if Christ [be] in you, the body [is] dead because of sin; but the Spirit [is] life because of righteousness.

11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies **by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.**

I. Paul's Confidence in Christ Rested in His Empowering:

[READ] Phil. 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

- ***There is much depth of meaning here as we took note of last time. What Paul writes of is an empowering (and I believe this to be quite personal and also common to all believers). It also is new to this particular dispensational plan so focused on his unlimited grace. It is remarkably different from the previous plans or even the future Kingdom in the detailed ways in which the Lord is working according to that grace of which we read so much in Paul's letters.***

- *Note that this is not about the Holy Spirit though we surely do possess the Holy Spirit as well as the Spirit of Christ.*
- *Paul's confidence here is probably due to his apostleship and the special work of God in him. He had been taught much about that by the ascended Christ Jesus and had taught the Philippians also, it seems. He does not need to explain himself here in this practical exhortation and has already taught doctrinally about it in other letters as we saw here recently. So this is the apostle taking note I think of something they already knew but needed to be reminded of and so he writes here in such bold and certain terms.*

II. Paul's Desire Was to Glorify Christ in All Things:

[READ] Phil. 1:20-21

20a According to my earnest expectation and [my] hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed

- *Both of these together, “earnest expectation and [my] hope”, might seem unusual. But they relate to the same thought that, lit. “with outstretched neck” and a Biblical hope based as always on the word of God Almighty, the apostle “knew”, verse 19, that he would be delivered from the current crisis. And he in fact was.*

20b but [that] with all boldness, as always, [so] now also

- *Paul's example for us includes his boldness (lit. “all-speaking”). This word signifies simplicity, transparency before the Lord. In other words, not leaving anything out! We think of boldness as a mannerism today but in ancient NT Greek it was, it seems, somewhat different in its meaning.*

20c Christ shall be magnified in my body,

- *Such confidence Paul expresses here. Even in his “body” Christ would be magnified! But wasn't that one area the false teachers had been especially highlighting as despicable? After all, Paul suffered from an eye malady that was not pleasant to see and affected his eyesight greatly. So this statement here has significance beyond what it might seem at first glance.*

So physical infirmities, with all that that may mean for these “earthen tents” we are confined by in this life, can never prevent the

Lord God from executing his plan in and through us. What a comfort it is to know that!

20d whether [it be] by life, or by death.

- ***Whether in living or in dying. Here he widens the focus considerably. He in effect says, look at my entire “living” or life and even my “dying” and you will see Christ magnified, Christ glorified.***

And now to summarize it in slightly different wording:

21 For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain.

- ***This is the key verse in this section. He already wrote about the final destination in verse 6:*** “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ”.

So this characterizes what he writes here. Whether he lives or dies Christ is his focus and at the center of his life. And so he should be for us as well. But there is more here for there are several dimensions to his thinking here, I am sure.

- ***He uses the word “gain” two other times:***

Phil. 3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Titus 1:11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

- ***So, having given up everything in this world for the sake of Christ and his gospel, he had nothing to live for, nothing in his daily walk of consequence in comparison with Christ and his glorious plan for his life. Paul's focus is on glorifying Christ and he recognizes how God is in total control of his life. Therefore life (and death) is all about what God is doing.***
- ***There is also something here in the very verb tenses that is significant:***

- ***This living, Paul writes of here, is a continuous, present tense infinitive. The dying is a point in time singled out for observation. He is in effect saying here: examine my living daily and my dying moment and you will confirm this truth, that for me Christ is everything. This is at the heart of what Paul calls “newness of life” in Rom. 6:4.***

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

- ***And then, finally, he has used the word “boldness” in the previous verse and used it in a particularly “strong” way: “with all boldness, as always, [so] now also”. Note that he does not say here that he is bold for Christ only in his “speaking”. He makes it clear that he is also bold for Christ in his “living”. And so it would also be in his “dying” if that would be God’s will, God’s perfect will for him. However, it is, he writes, and, “in my body” Christ will be magnified. Amen.***

And don’t forget, he has two witnesses, Timothy and Epaphraditus. Surely they would be confirming until their dying breaths that Paul’s care for them was rooted always in Christ Jesus and that he was therefore their example in life, and in death. Amen.

Conclusions & Exhortation:

- ***We began here today with his example before the Philippians, a ministry of sacrifice, trial, yes, but that was all with the victory that the Lord provided even in Rome in confinement in Caesar’s domain. The empowering life and spirit of the Lord Jesus had made all the difference. We now end our study today with what may be seen as the human side of this, Paul’s agony or internal struggle for the sake of the saints. It is a struggle “in the spirit of Jesus Christ” however and in no way a struggle or battle of the flesh. So Paul’s purpose is clear in the writing of this letter.***

He said it so well at the end of the first chapter:

Phil. 1:29-30

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me.

- ***This is an appropriate place to stop our study of Philippians today: Paul was “consumed” by the “race” he was on which he calls a “conflict” or “agony” at the end of the chapter. We will look at that and these closing verses next time. This is not to say his heart was improperly focused or that his ministry had a negative aspect at all, but rather that he had a consuming passion in life and the Philippians were central to that passion.***

Have you, have I, entered into this same conflict? Are we running the same race?

[READ] 2 Tim. 4:7-8

7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished [my] course, I have kept the faith:
8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.