

Magnifying Christ By Living Him¹

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:20-30

INTRODUCTION

The salvation which was according to Paul's earnest expectation and hope was that he would not be put to shame, but would magnify Christ in his body. Therefore, in verse 20 we have a definition of the practical enjoyment of salvation. To enjoy this kind of salvation is to live Christ. This is the reason Paul says in verse 21, "For to me to live is Christ." Paul's sufferings did not put him to shame. Instead, they afforded him an opportunity to magnify Christ. If we experience the salvation mentioned in these verses, then when we undergo suffering, we shall magnify Christ and not be put to shame. But if we are defeated by suffering, suppressed by it, and filled with worry, we shall be put to shame. Between salvation in verse 19 and the magnifying of Christ in verse 20, we have the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Actually, in our experience, salvation, Christ, and the bountiful supply of the Spirit are one. But if we would enjoy Christ and experience Him as our salvation in every circumstance, we need the bountiful supply of the Spirit. Just as this Spirit dwelt in the apostle Paul during his imprisonment, He also dwells within us today. Through the supply of such a Spirit, Paul enjoyed salvation.

MAGNIFYING CHRIST

Paul said, "...even now Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death." (1:20) To magnify means to make something large to our sight. Paul magnified Christ; he made Him great before the eyes of others, especially before the eyes of those who guarded him in prison. As a result, some eventually turned to Christ. To the Roman empire Jesus was nothing. But as Paul was held captive in a Roman prison, he magnified Christ, making Him to appear great in the eyes of his captors. I do not believe that when Paul was in prison, he was free to do much preaching of Christ. On the contrary, he was very limited and under strict control. However, even in such circumstances, Christ was magnified in his body. With all boldness Paul sought to magnify Him always.

LIVING CHRIST

Paul goes on to say, "For to me to live is Christ." (1:21) The little word *for* at the beginning of this verse is important. It indicates that what is to follow is an explanation of the preceding verse. Christ could be magnified in Paul's body because Paul lived Christ. In order to magnify Christ, we must live Him. The word *for* in verse 21 helps us to see that Paul could magnify Christ because to him to live was Christ. In Paul's chained body Christ was exalted, extolled, praised, and appreciated because Paul lived Christ. If we would live Christ, we must take Him as our person and be one person with Him. He and we must be one in a practical way. Inwardly Christ was Paul's life, and outwardly Christ was Paul's living. Paul and Christ thus had one life and one living. Christ's life was Paul's life, and Paul's living was Christ's living. The two, Christ and Paul, lived as one. The most difficult thing in our Christian life is to practice to live Christ. We may be "holy," "spiritual," and "victorious" without living Christ. Even though we may be "holy," "spiritual," and "victorious," we are still the ones living our natural life. We are not living Christ. Instead of pursuing holiness, spirituality, or victory, we should seek to live Christ and magnify Him always with all boldness, whether through life or through death. God's desire today is that we live Christ.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN CHRIST AND GAIN

When Paul said, "To die is gain," he meant that to die is to enjoy Christ's presence in a better way. (1:21) Paul says that his desire is to depart and to be with Christ. (1:23) To be with Christ is a matter of degree, not of place. While Paul was desiring to be with Christ in a higher degree, he was already with Him continually. Through his physical death, he would be with Christ to a fuller extent than he enjoyed in this earthly life. There is a vast difference between enjoying the presence of Christ and living Christ. Paul not only enjoyed the Lord's presence, but he also lived Him. He knew that when he died he would have no further opportunity to live Christ, but he would enter into a higher enjoyment of the presence of Christ. Therefore, to die would be gain. What Paul valued was not only the presence of Christ, but also the opportunity to live Him. To live Christ is a much deeper experience than simply to be in His presence. Living Him goes far beyond the enjoyment of His presence. To live the Lord is even better than to be with the Lord.

¹ This outline is excerpted from the Life Study of Philippians, by Witness Lee. The adapter is solely responsible for any copy or editorial errors.

FRUIT FROM WORK

Paul's use of the word *fruit* indicates that his work was actually his living. (1:22) When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was living in prison; he was not working. This indicates that his living was his work. From such a living work, fruit would come forth. The fruit of this work was Christ lived out, magnified, and ministered to others. The fruit of Paul's work was thus the transfusion of Christ into others. Paul's living work was to minister Christ to others and to transfuse the Christ he magnified into them. As far as Paul was concerned, to die was to gain, but to live was to carry on such a living and fruitful work. It was difficult for him to choose between the two.

REMAINING FOR THE SAINTS' PROGRESS AND JOY

The apostle's consideration was not selfish, but was for the sake of the saints. (1:24) Paul realized that the churches needed more of the ministry of Christ. For their sake, he would remain in order to minister Christ to them. Paul was a person full of Christ. When he spoke, he spoke Christ. He said that he will remain and continue with the believers for their progress and joy of the faith. (1:25) The faith here refers to what the saints believe in (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 4:7); progress, to the growth in life; and joy, to the enjoyment of Christ. Paul was willing to remain for the sake of the saints' progress and joy of the faith.

BOASTING IN CHRIST THROUGH PAUL A CHANNEL FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST

Paul then says that the believers may boast, rejoice, glory in him in Christ. (Phil.1:26) It is rather easy to boast in Christ, but it is not so easy to boast in someone in Christ. However, what does this mean? What we receive of Christ is not received directly in Christ, but is received from the Head through other members of the Body. Paul magnified Christ and lived Christ to the uttermost and because he did, he could transfuse Christ into the saints and minister Christ to all the churches. Therefore, the saints had reason to boast in such an apostle. If Paul had died prematurely, their boasting in him would have been cut short. But as long as Paul continued to live, they were able to boast in him in Christ. In the Body life there is the urgent need of certain ones to function as channels of supply. We need members like Paul. As long as such ones are with us, the transfusion continues unabated, and we can boast in them in Christ.

STANDING IN THE SPIRIT BUT STRIVING WITH ONE SOUL

Where do we stand firm? We stand firm in spirit. If we do not stay in our spirit, we shall be divided. (1:27) First opinions will enter in, then there will be dissension, and eventually division will come about. If we are drawn out of the spirit when we are opposed or attacked, doubts and questions will rise up within us. When we return to our spirit, stay there, and close our being to negative questions and doubts, there are no problems. Return to the spirit and exercise to pray. Only our spirit can keep us together at such times. We need to stand firm not with one spirit, but in one spirit. Standing firm requires a place, and this place is our spirit.

But standing firm in one spirit, however, is a defensive measure, not an offensive one. Without an offense we shall not be able to maintain a proper defense. Thus, in order to stand firm in our spirit, we also need to strive, to fight together, with one soul. Whereas the preposition *in* denotes a realm, the preposition *with* denotes an instrument. The realm is our spirit, but the instrument is our soul. The faculties of our soul may be likened to weapons used in warfare. We should be thoughtful in our mind, full of feeling in our emotion, and strong in our will. Then we shall have powerful weapons with which to fight.

Our problem is that either we are wishy-washy and do not use the faculties of our soul, or we become dissenting and fight each other instead of fighting the enemy. Those who are wishy-washy want to be "spiritual," they always act nice, kind, and humble, never striving with their soul in the faith of the gospel. Others, however, may fight and strive, using the mind, emotion, and will. But in fighting they become dissenting. Instead of fighting the enemy, they fight against other saints. This is the reason Paul tells us to strive with one soul. With one soul we should fight against the enemy.

We surely need Paul's charge to strive together with one soul. In our fighting, our striving, we need to be on the alert concerning our mind, emotion, and will. We need to be watchful with respect to our thought, our feeling, and our intention. We should not give any ground to our natural mind, will, and emotion. They must not be allowed to interfere with our striving together with one soul. We who fight for God's interest must be in one spirit, and we must strive with one soul. This is another way for us to experience Christ. To stand firm is to experience Christ, and to strive together is also to experience Christ. Let us all experience Christ by standing firm in one spirit, striving together with one soul.