

PAUL'S PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Reading: Phil. 1:12-21

Text: Phil. 1:19-21

Intro: Last week we began looking into this letter to the Philippians in an attempt to learn how we could experience the joy which forms such a major part of this epistle.

We noted that Paul was not a happy Christian because he primarily sought happiness, but that his joy in the Lord was rather the result of other things--the first being, a knowledge of the truth regarding salvation as expressed in 1:6.

The truth of that verse applies to every Christian. But not every Christian knows it, and not all who know it are really enjoying it. But this is where Paul began--with the truth!

Tonight we want to see how he applied that truth to his own life.

This letter has been called Paul's spiritual autobiography. In it we see that he had to come to grips with the truth in his own personal experience. He had to take the knowledge of Phil. 1:6 and apply it to his experience as a prisoner of Rome. AND IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE HE DID THIS THAT THERE WAS NO LET-UP IN HIS JOY. LET US SEE HOW HE DID THIS.

I. Paul had one main objective in life. Cf. v. 21.

"To me" is emphatic in the Gk, and emphasizes the personal nature of what Paul is writing. It does not necessarily follow that this is true of every Christian. He is not saying that Christ was his life, but he is saying that "living" . . . is for him so full of Christ, so occupied with and for Him, that CHRIST sums it up" (Moule, p. 24).

This permeated his whole life. Note his testimony in Phil. 3:7-14--so full of Christ. He did not leave Judaism for heaven, or for an apostleship, but for Christ!

Death could only be looked upon as "gain" because it meant being "with Christ."

Not too many believers even in Paul's day shared his life-objective. But cf. Phil. 2:19-21.

So, before Paul ever faced the circumstances he was in now, this desire for Christ, knowing Him, loving Him, glorifying Him, had become all of life to the Apostle.

1:6
Divine
point of
view
1:19-21
the
human

Now it is important to note that such an objective does not necessarily bring joy unless we do a second thing which Paul testifies here that he did. Circumstances always are a threat to our joy in the Lord.

- II. He sought the fulfillment of his life objective in his present circumstances. Cf. v. 20.

The truth must be applied in every situation. Here he is in prison. How can his objective in life find fulfillment here?

Note first

- A. The intensity of his desire: "According to my earnest expectation and my hope."

"Earnest expectation" appears again in Rom. 8:19. The expression describes one who is watching for something with his head stretched out as far as it can go.

Ill. A child's anticipation on Christmas morning.

This was a hope that completely absorbed the Apostle Paul. It was never out of his mind. He had his heart set on a certain goal, and he knew that the goal could only be reached in a certain way.

So the intensity of his desire to please Christ was not diminished in the least by Roman soldiers.

But note also

- B. The negative aspect: "that in nothing I shall be ashamed."

Paul introduces something here which we do not hear much about in these days. Could it be that he was thinking of the coming of the Lord, or at least of standing in his presence--and that he wanted to do it with joy?

Note how John uses this same word, "ashamed," in 1 Jn. 2:28, "And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

What do these verses mean except that we will be ashamed of everything that we have done which has

not had Christ and His glory as our main objective? Paul knew that his days as a Roman prisoner would undergo examination at the judgment seat of Christ, and he wanted a "well done" from his Lord.

But there is another matter to be seen in this verse

- B. The positive side: "Christ shall be magnified in my body."

What do you do when you magnify anything? You make it easier to be seen. Believers are to be like spiritual telescopes. We are observatories where men are able to look at the Saviour. It is our job, as Bishop Moule has said, "to make" our "Lord bright and great to eyes which otherwise would see little of Him" (p. 24).

In these bodies of ours which He has purchased, and which one day will be like His, He is now to be magnified--"by life, or by death." Cf. Phil. 3: 20, 21.

What a prospect, not only for the future, but also for the present!

But there is a third point in our passage that we need to see.

- III. Paul knew the means by which this grand and glorious objective could be realized in Rome.

- A. First, by their prayers.

Do you believe in prayer like Paul did? Do you believe it moved the hand of God in the lives of His people? Have you really prayed for that Christian you have been so critical of? Paul needed prayer, and did not hesitate to make it known.

What did he expect in answer to prayer? Release? No.

- B. "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

Oh, there is so much in this expression!

The supply is not just what the Holy Spirit gives, but the Holy Spirit is Himself the supply!

And what does He do?

He is "the Spirit of Jesus Christ" because He reveals Christ (cf. John 16:14, 15).

And the only way he can do this is through the Word.

So we have the Spirit of God manifesting Christ through the Word as the people of God pray. Paul had no other power than that which you and I have: the same privilege (prayer), the same Holy Spirit, the same Lord Jesus Christ, and the same Word-- only now it is forever complete.

Is it any wonder that in my last point I can say that

- IV. Paul was assured of the final outcome: "For I know that this shall turn (the outcome, the result) to my salvation."

Remember that, according to Phil. 1:6, God's work in you is not completed--all that is comprehended in this great word, salvation.

But it will be! Not only by Phil. 1:6, but also by Phil. 1:19-21. The first gives us the divine point-of-view; the latter, the human point-of-view.

Concl: Is it any wonder that Paul writes as he does in v. 18.

Christ was being exalted through the preaching of the Gospel, and this was all that the Apostle ever wanted.

Oh, that the Lord might teach us this precious truth that we, too, might share the joy of being and doing that which delights the heart of God.

O Christ, in Thee . . . (Kiswick
Hymnal #161)

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