

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN PHILIPPIANS

Session 1

A Life in the Furtherance of the Gospel, Shining as Luminaries and Holding Forth the Word of Life

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:5, 7, 12, 27; 2:15-16

- I. The whole book of Philippians is a definition of the gospel, which is the preaching of God's economy—Phil. 1:5, 7, 12, 15-18, 27; 2:22; 4:3, 15:**
- A. The gospel of God's economy is not simply to have a group of people who are forgiven of their sins, justified, washed by the blood of Christ, and regenerated—it includes every aspect of the experience of Christ covered in this book.
 - B. We are blessed and privileged to participate in the fellowship, furtherance, defense, confirmation, advancement, and faith of the gospel, which includes Christ as the One lived out and magnified through us (1:19-21), Christ as our pattern (2:5-11), Christ as the goal (3:8-14), and Christ as our inward strength (4:11-13).
- II. The Christ-experiencing and Christ-enjoying life is a life in the furtherance of the gospel, a gospel-preaching life that is not individualistic but corporate—1:5, 7, 27; 4:13:**
- A. This kind of fellowship, which kept the believers from being individualistic and diversely minded, implies that they were one with the apostle Paul and with one another; this gave them the ground for their experience and enjoyment of Christ, which is the main point of this book—4:10.
 - B. The more fellowship we have in the furtherance of the gospel, the more Christ we experience and enjoy; this kills our self, ambition, preference, and choice—1:7, 27.
 - C. The Philippian believers participated with the Apostle Paul in the fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel by their financial contributions to the apostle, which became a sweet-smelling savor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God—4:10, 15-20; Heb. 13:16; 3 John 8; cf. 2 Cor. 9:7; Acts 2:44-47.
 - D. Paul preached and suffered for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, because he cared solely for the interests and accomplishment of God's economy on the earth—1:7, 12-18:
 - 1. On the negative side, we must defend the gospel against the perversion and distortion of today's religion—Rev. 2:9, 24; 3:20.
 - 2. On the positive side, the confirmation of the gospel is for the announcing of the revelations of the two mysteries in the Epistles—Christ as the mystery of God and the church as mystery of Christ—Col. 1:26-28; 2:2, 4:3; Eph. 3:4, 9; 5:32.
 - E. Paul's sufferings resulted in the advancement of the gospel as a pioneer cuts the way for an army to march forward—Phil. 1:12:
 - 1. Today we are marching on the way cut by Paul in his sufferings for the gospel so that the church may advance—1:27, 30.
 - 2. Our suffering for the gospel today positions us to share and enjoy the processed Triune God as grace and encourages, strengthens, and stirs up the saints to speak the word of God with boldness—1:7, 29, 14.

III. We need to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ by standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel—v. 27:

- A. We need not only to stand firm in one spirit in order to experience Christ but also to strive together with one soul along with the faith of the gospel.
- B. After being regenerated in our spirit, we must be transformed in our soul so that we can be like-souled (lit. co-souled) with one another, striving and fighting together with the faculties of our soul exercised as weapons in warfare to fight for God's interests on the earth—2:2, 20-21; 3:14-15; 4:2-3; cf. Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:4-5.

IV. In the midst of this dark and corrupt world which is usurped by Satan, our function is to shine as luminaries, holding forth the word of life—Phil. 2:15-16; 1 John 5:19; 2:15-17:

- A. The Greek word for luminaries in Philippians 2:15 refers to heavenly bodies that reflect the light of the sun:
 - 1. As such luminaries, the believers shine in the world; they do not possess any light in themselves but have a heavenly ability to reflect the light of Christ—James 1:17.
 - 2. Christ is the sun, with the church as the moon and the believers as the planets to reflect Him by holding forth the word of life—S. S. 6:10.
- B. To hold forth the word of life is to apply it, to present it, and to offer it to the world by living out Christ—Acts 5:20 and footnote 2.
- C. The way to live and magnify Christ by shining as luminaries is to be saturated with His word of life:
 - 1. The word of life is different from the doctrine of dead letters; it is the living breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16), the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63).
 - 2. When we are right in our spirit and pure in our heart and then come to the Word with our whole being open to the Lord, we will have the sense that we are entering into a sphere of light.
 - 3. We need to eat, drink, and breathe the word in the Bible by pray-reading and singing it:
 - a. According to the entire revelation in the Holy Bible, God's words are good for us to eat, and we need to eat them—Jer. 15:16; Psa. 119:103; Matt. 4:4; Heb. 5:12-14; 6:5; 1 Pet. 2:2-3.
 - b. The Scripture, the word of God, is the breathing out of God—2 Tim. 3:16.
 - c. The way to receive the Word is by means of all prayer and petition—Eph. 6:17.
 - d. The way to let the Lord's word dwell in us richly is by teaching, admonishing, and singing—Col. 3:16.
 - e. As we pray-read a portion of the Word, we will sense that something inwardly is moving, operating in us to comfort, strengthen, satisfy, and refresh us.

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KEY VERSES

- Phil. 1:5a** [Y]our fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now.
- v. 13** So that my bonds have become manifest as being in Christ among the whole Praetorian guard and to all the rest.
- vv. 19-21a** **19** For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, **20** according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. **21a** For to me, to live is Christ.

MINISTRY EXCERPTS

**THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL
BEING THE FACTOR FOR LIVING CHRIST**

In [Philippians] chapter one Christ is our life and living. To take Christ as our life within and our living without is to live Christ (v. 21a). This chapter also reveals that the reason we live Christ, taking Christ as our life and our living, is for the furtherance of the gospel (vv. 5, 12). The experience of Christ as our life and living comes out of the furtherance of the gospel. The more we have fellowship in the gospel, in coordination with the apostle, the more we live Christ. The factor for living Christ is the furtherance of the gospel which is carried out in a corporate way.

Some have separated the preaching of the gospel from the experience of Christ. This is a mistaken concept. Our experience of Christ, our living of Christ, must have the factor of the furtherance of the gospel. Without such a factor, our words about living Christ are vain. Paul and the Philippians lived Christ, taking Christ as their life within and their living without, because they all were in the corporate fellowship of the gospel. The apostle was burdened for the furtherance of the gospel, and the Philippians were in coordination with him. Paul and the Philippians were happy in the furtherance of the gospel, and they all enjoyed Christ as their life within and their living without. Philippians 1 reveals not only the factor but also the result. The factor is the furtherance of the gospel with the apostle, and the result is the enjoyment of Christ, the experience of Christ, as both our life within and our living without. When you go out in the gospel, you enjoy Christ not in a doctrinal way but in a very experiential way.

Our enjoyment of Christ must have a factor, and it must also have an issue. The furtherance of the gospel is the factor of our enjoyment of Christ. Furthermore, the more we enjoy Christ, the more we participate in the furtherance of the gospel. Thus, the furtherance of the gospel is also the issue of our enjoyment of Christ.

I dare not compare myself with the Apostle Paul, but in my experience, I have had the same kind of feeling that he expressed in Philippians 1:21-24. As an elderly person, I have had a lot of experiences on this earth. I have lost my taste for anything on this earth except Christ. As a young person it is easy to be attracted to other things. But, as an

elderly man, without the Lord Jesus, I would lose interest in living. This is because there is nothing good on this earth. The only interest, taste, and enjoyment I have as I remain on this earth is to help sinners receive Christ, to help all of you enjoy Christ more, and to help the church be built up organically as the living Body of Christ. This is what I really enjoy.

I have been quite busy labouring even until late at night. Yet, I have had a good and sound sleep every night. Occasionally, the enemy Satan raises up attacks from different directions, but the Lord has taught me the lesson of not being touched or stirred up regardless of what happens. I can testify that nothing on this earth can frustrate someone who enjoys Christ. Paul's experience was like this. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Philippians from a prison in Rome while he was under the threat of martyrdom. He knew that he might be killed, but he was not bothered or upset; rather, he expected to magnify Christ in his body through life or through death. He said this while his body was in bonds. His concern was not for his bonds but for how the enjoyment of Christ among the Philippians could be increased...Their experience of Christ made him very happy. (*The Experience and Growth in Life*, pp. 65-67)