

## THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN PHILIPPIANS

### Session 3

#### **A Life of Expectation—Living Christ for the Building Up of the Body of Christ**

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:20-21; 1:19-21a; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:14-19; 4:12, 16

- I. For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”—Phil. 3:20-21:**
- A. Because our citizenship is in the heavens, we should not be occupied with earthly things, the physical things needed for our existence—1 Tim. 6:6-10.
  - B. In dealing with our body, we should take care of our physical need but should not indulge in excessive physical enjoyment—Phil. 3:17-19; 1 Cor. 9:27.
  - C. As we await and love the Lord’s glorious appearing, we should live a God-expressing and flesh-restricting life—Titus 2:12-13; Luke 21:34-36; 2 Tim. 4:8.
- II. Christ “will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself”—Phil. 3:21:**
- A. We are waiting for Christ to come back so that we may be brought into the ultimate consummation of God’s salvation—the transfiguration of our body:
    - 1. In His salvation God first regenerated our spirit (John 3:6), now is transforming our soul (Rom. 12:2), and consummately will transfigure our body for our glorification, making us the same as Christ in all three parts of our being (1 John 3:2).
    - 2. The body of our humiliation is our natural body, made of worthless dust (Gen. 2:7) and damaged by sin, weakness, sickness, and death (Rom. 6:6; 7:24; 8:11) but the body of His glory is Christ’s resurrected body, saturated with God’s glory (Luke 24:26) and transcendent over corruption and death (Rom. 6:9).
  - B. The transfiguration of our body is the redemption of our body for the full sonship of God—Rom. 8:23.
  - C. The transfiguration of our body will be the glorification of our entire being—Rom. 8:30, 17; 1 Pet. 5:10a; 2 Tim. 2:10.
  - D. The believers’ arriving at glorification is the climax of their maturity in the life of God and the climax of God’s salvation in life for the accomplishment of God’s economy and the satisfaction of God’s desire—Rev. 21:10-11.
- III. The subject and the controlling concept of the book of Philippians is the experience of Christ—3:7-10; 4:13:**
- A. The experience of Christ is the master key which opens the book of Philippians to us.
  - B. The experience of Christ is a Body matter—1:19; 2:1-2; 4:2-3, 10, 14-20:
    - 1. Whatever is in the Body and of the Body involves mutual fellowship; the experience of Christ requires such mutuality—2:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:25.
    - 2. The experience of Christ must be in the Body and for the Body; only by experiencing Christ in the Body can we experience Him to the fullest extent— Eph. 4:16; Rom. 12:5.

- C. The secret of experiencing Christ is to be one in soul, joined in soul, like-souled, with others—Phil. 1:27; 2:2, 19-20:
  1. If we would experience Christ to the fullest extent in the Body, we need to be like-souled and we need to risk our soul—vv. 20, 30; Rom. 16:3-4.
  2. Because Timothy was like-souled with Paul, he was in the position to experience Christ to the uttermost in the Body, just as Paul was—Phil. 2:19-20; 1 Cor. 4:16-17; 16:10.

**IV. Philippians is a book not only on the experience of Christ but also on living Christ—Phil. 1:19-21a:**

- A. The basic thought in the Bible is that the Triune God desires to work Himself into us so that we may take Him as life and live Him—Eph. 3:16-17a; 2 Sam. 7:12-13:
  1. God's economy is to dispense Himself into us and to work Himself into us as our life and life supply in order to live Him—Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.
  2. God's intention is to have a group of people who are one with Him in His life and nature; those who are one with God in the divine life and nature are able to express Him—Eph. 3:19b, 21.
- B. The Christian life is a life of living Christ for the constitution and building up of the Body of Christ—4:1-3, 12, 16; Col. 1:24; 2:19:
  1. The Christian life is to live Christ with His divine attributes expressed in His human virtues as a part of His organic Body—Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:14.
  2. For the Body, we should live a life that is Christ Himself, living as parts of His Body for the universal consummation of the eternal economy of God—Eph. 3:8-11.
- C. The Christian life is not a life of ethics, religion, culture, or even morality; the Christian life is Christ—Col. 3:4:
  1. As believers in Christ, we should live a life which is actually Christ Himself—John 6:57.
  2. The standard of the Christian life is Christ, and the normal experience of Christ is to live Christ—Eph. 4:20; Col. 2:2-3, 8; Phil. 1:21a.
- D. Paul's life was to live Christ; Christ lived within Paul as his life, and Paul lived Christ without as His living; they lived together as one person with one life and one living—Phil. 1:21a; Gal. 2:20.
- E. To live Christ means that no matter what our circumstances may be, Christ is magnified in us and that we are not put to shame in anything—Phil. 1:20a; 1 John 2:28.

**V. The Body of Christ is the issue of the experience of Christ, so we need to pray desperately that we would live Christ for the Body of Christ to be a reality—Phil. 1:19-21, 24; Eph. 3:14-19:**

- A. The climax, the highest point, of the divine revelation in the entire Bible is to live Christ.
- B. Living Christ also requires that we love Him to the uttermost—1 Cor. 2:9; 16:22; cf. Rev. 2:4.

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**KEY VERSES**

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**Phil. 3:20-21**     **20** For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.

**Heb. 10:23-25**     **23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope unwavering, for He who has promised is faithful; **24** And let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works, **25** Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

**MINISTRY EXCERPTS**

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**A HEAVENLY CALLING**

The Christian life on earth is a life of waiting for the Lord's return. What does it mean to wait for His return? To wait for His return means that while we live as others do, we have an expectation of His return always within us. Miss M. E. Barber was a person in whom I found no trace of thought of remaining on earth for a long time. She was genuinely waiting for the Lord's return. Once I was walking with her on a street, and she said, "Perhaps, I will meet the Lord when we turn this corner." She asked me to walk at a distance from her on the other side of the sidewalk, and repeated, "I do not know whether this will be *the* corner for me." Those who wait for the Lord's return are like a man walking down a precipitous hill; he does not know for sure when he will turn a corner and meet someone walking up the same path. Our sister genuinely expected the Lord's return daily and hourly. Notice that we are speaking of our expectation of His return, not our belief in His return...Many people are very familiar with the prophecies concerning the Lord's return, but they are not necessarily waiting for His return. We have to remember that we are heavenly citizens. We should be taught by grace to expect the Lord's return. We put no hope in this earth. We know that this earth will never change for the better. While we serve, work, and labor with God here on earth, we are calling and gathering a group of people to come under the Lord's name for His satisfaction. We serve and work for the sake of His second coming. (CWWL, Vol. 48, *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, Vol. 3, pp. 912-91)

**WHAT CHRIST WILL SETTLE WHEN HE COMES**

**Injustice**

When the Lord comes back, the first thing He will settle is injustice. Today the biggest problem in the world is injustice. Isaiah 11:4 says that the Lord will "judge the poor in righteousness, / And decide with equity for the afflicted of the land." To judge with justice is something more than what the world can do today. It is not a Christian's job. When the Lord comes again, He will execute justice.

## **Wars**

When the Lord comes again, He will settle all wars. Today man cannot deal with the problem of wars...Everyone agrees that there should be peace, but there is no real peace. Man cannot achieve peace through war. Yet Isaiah 2:4 says that when the millennium comes, men will “beat their swords into plowshares, / And their spears into pruning hooks, / Nation will not lift the sword against nation, / Nor will they learn war anymore.” We should realize that we are not the ones to disarm others of swords and spears. We do not wage wars, and we do not stop wars in the hope of achieving peace. These are things beyond us. When Christ comes, He will annul all wars and bring in peace.

## **Sicknesses**

When Christ comes He will settle all sicknesses. Today many people pay attention to public health, hygiene, and medical aid. But sickness will never be thoroughly eradicated today. In the Bible the two books that speak of plagues the most are Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Both books show us that plagues are in the Lord’s hand; the Lord is in control of these things. In the prophecies in Revelation and Matthew, we are told that plagues will increase in the end times. A Christian should not be given merely to the work of hygiene and medical aid. We must realize that sicknesses in this world will increase. Isaiah 33:24 says that when Christ comes, no one will say, “I am sick.” Ezekiel 47:12 says that in the new heaven and new earth, the tree of the new city will be for the healing of the nations. Hence, when the Lord comes again, the problem of sickness will be solved. (pp. 917-918)

## **CONSIDERING ONE ANOTHER SO AS TO INCITE ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS**

Based on Hebrews 10:24-25, I believe that in the apostles’ time the church practiced the group meetings in this way...In these verses there are three crucial words: *consider*, *incite*, and *exhorting*. Verse 24 charges us to consider one another. The word *consider* is very meaningful. To consider one another implies to remember, to have a sincere, loving concern for one another. It implies that the saints are in our heart. This verse goes on to say that we should incite one another to love and good works. *Good works* here refers to giving something to others freely or doing something freely for others. To give a financial gift or to care for a sick brother is a good work. There is the need for many such good works in the Body. We need to incite one another to love and to this kind of good work. Verse 25 also says that we are to exhort one another. Considering one another, inciting one another, and exhorting one another cannot be accomplished in the big meetings. They can be carried out only in the small group meetings. (*The Practice of the Group Meetings*, pp. 46-47)

[Hebrews 10:24-25] are the basis for our practice of the group meetings...These verses first say that we need to consider one another. This implies that we have a genuine care for all the members of our vital group. To care for one another means to consider one another. Today we may not care for others. We do not really care whether or not a certain brother comes to the meeting or whether or not a certain sister is sick. The genuine care for one another needs to be recovered among us.

To consider one another in a practical way is to love one another. We say that we love one another, but in what way do we love? We may not care for anyone in a practical way. Love means practical care and consideration. When we consider one another, we incite one another to love and good works. We stir up one another. If someone cares for me, that spontaneously stirs me up, incites me, to love and good works. *To love* here is not an

infinitive. *Love* is a noun, just as *good works* is a noun. We incite one another to love and good works by caring for one another, considering one another.

We need the intimate fellowship with one another with the practical care and shepherding. One sister may point out that another sister in the group is absent because she is having some particular trouble. After sharing with the other group members the nature of the problem, the group can pray for her and fellowship about how to give her the practical care and help.

If a brother has lost his job, we should pray for him. We should also consider his material situation. This is real love. James in his Epistle says, "If a brother or sister is without clothing and lacks daily food, and any one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and filled, yet you do not give them the necessities of the body, what is the profit?" (2:15-16). In his first Epistle, John says, "Whoever has the livelihood of the world and sees that his brother has need and shuts up his affections from him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue but in deed and truthfulness" (3:17-18). If we see brothers who are in need and merely tell them that the Lord will take care of them, that is not love. That is vain talk. We should care for one another, consider one another, in a practical way.

Without such a loving care and consideration of one another, we may be very indifferent toward the things of God's economy concerning Christ and the church. But once a brother is loved in some practical care, that impresses him and incites him to think about the Christian life and about God's economy. When a brother who is Italian cares for another brother who is Chinese, this is a marvelous testimony. This shows that the different races are swallowed up in the new man and testifies of the practical love among the members of the Body of Christ. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, pp. 163-164)