

HWMR - THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST, Week 1

The Intrinsic Significance of the Experience of Christ

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:3-6, 19-21a, 27; 2:2, 20-21, 30; 3:1; 4:1, 4

- Philippians 1:3 - I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you,
 Philippians 1:4 - Always in my every petition on behalf of you all, making my petition with joy,
 Philippians 1:5 - For your fellowship unto the **furtherance of the gospel** from the first day until now,
 Philippians 1:6 - Being confident of this very thing, that **He who has begun** in you a good work **will complete** it until the day of Christ Jesus;
- Philippians 1:19 - 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,
 Philippians 1:20 - 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.
 Philippians 1:21 - For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.
 Philippians 1:27 - Only, **conduct yourselves** in a manner **worthy** of the gospel of Christ, that whether coming and seeing you or being absent, I may hear of the things concerning you, that you **stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together** along with the faith of the gospel,
- Philippians 2:2 - Make my joy full, that you **think** the **same thing**, having the same love, joined in soul, **thinking the one thing**,
 Philippians 2:20 - For I have no one **like-souled** who will genuinely **care** for what concerns you;
 Philippians 2:21 - For all seek their own things, not **the things of Christ Jesus**.
 Philippians 2:30 - Because for the work of Christ he drew near unto death, risking his life, that he might **fill up** your lack of service toward me.
- Philippians 3:1 - Finally, my brothers, **rejoice** in the Lord. To write the same things to you, for me it is not irksome, but for you it is safe.
- Philippians 4:1 - So then, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, in the same way **stand firm** in the Lord, beloved.
- Philippians 4:4 - **Rejoice** in the Lord always; **again** I will say, **rejoice**.

We **magnify** Christ by the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Although this supply is bountiful, it is not visible. We may not sense that the supply is bountiful; nevertheless, it is bountiful. Christ can never be exhausted. Many of us may feel that we are weak, but this weakness is a **mysterious weakness**, for **actually we are not weak**. Some, however, may claim to be strong, but their strength is not real. **All the experiences of Christ are a mystery**. This is the **magnification of Christ**.

When you sense that you are experiencing Christ, that may not be real. But when you doubt whether or not you are experiencing Christ, that may be real. **The experience of Christ in our Christian life is mysterious**. A mystery is something that we cannot understand or explain but that we can simply accept. (The Experience of Christ, Chapter 1, Sec. 5)

Day 1

I. The experience of Christ is a **mystery**:

- A. **God** is a mystery, **Christ** is the mystery of God (Col. 2:2), and the **church** is the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4); hence, the church is actually a mystery within a mystery.
- B. Our **Christian living** is a **mystery**; for example, although human love is limited, the proper love lived out by a Christian is unlimited; hence, it is a mystery—cf. v. 19a.
- C. To **magnify** Christ is to express Christ **without** limitation (Phil. 1:20); it is to show the whole universe that the very Christ by whom we live is unlimited.
- D. Paul's **experience of Christ** as **his unlimited endurance** was the **magnification of the unlimited Christ**; any attribute we have through living Christ **by** the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ will be unlimited and thus mysterious—vv. 19-21a.

- E. Even our **forgiveness** of others needs to be a **magnification of Christ**; our forgiveness is the inexhaustible Christ Himself being magnified in us—Matt. 18:21-22.
- F. In the **midst of suffering**, we should simply love the Lord and experience Him; then we will **magnify Christ**, expressing Him as the One who is unlimited; it is a joy to magnify Christ through suffering—2 Cor. 12:7-10.
- G. The experience of Christ is a mystery, and whatever we experience of Christ is unlimited; if we see this vision, it will not only **control** our life but also **strengthen** our Christian walk; **God's intention is to magnify Christ through us**.
- H. The **church life** is the sum total of our Christian living; we all live Christ, and our **Christian living** is **added together** to make the **church life**; when we come together as the church, we are a complete mystery—1 Tim. 3:15-16.
- I. Paul says, "*To me, to live is Christ*" (Phil. 1:21a); this means that we can live to be Christ; the Christ whom we experience and whom we live is a mystery; we should not have any assurance of our experience, for all experiences of Christ are mysterious.

THE BEST CHOICE OF PAUL

Philippians 1:18-21 is one sentence. In **verse 18** Paul says, "*What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is announced, and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.*" Verse 19 begins with the word **for**. This indicates that verse 19 is an explanation of verse 18. **Verse 19** says, "*For I know that for me this shall turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*" The word **this** refers to the different preachings of Christ mentioned by Paul in the foregoing verses. Through the **petition** of the saints and the **bountiful supply** of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Paul knew that these different preachings would **turn out to salvation**. Then **verse 20** opens with the words according to my earnest expectation and hope. This phrase modifies salvation in verse 19. With a full hope, Paul expected to **enjoy salvation**. Verse 20 indicates that the salvation Paul expected to enjoy was that **in nothing he would be put to shame, but that with all boldness, as always, Christ would be magnified in his body**.

PAUL'S EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, **he was in prison** in a foreign country, far away from his homeland. Paul had good reason to worry and be sad. **Since** his circumstances were so difficult, he could have easily wept about his situation. However, **if** Paul had been weeping instead of rejoicing, he could not have said, "*For me this shall turn out to salvation.*" If he had wept, he would not have experienced salvation in that environment. Suppose you were a Jew held captive in a Roman prison. Would you have rejoiced? I am sure we all would have felt sorrowful and homesick. But **instead** of weeping, Paul **rejoiced** in the Lord. For him, **everything that happened turned out to salvation**.

According to the context of these verses, **salvation** means that Paul was **not put to shame in anything**. Not only did he not feel shameful, but **nothing caused him to be put to shame**. Christ was **magnified** in Paul's body. This **magnification of Christ**, spoken of in verse 20, is **the very salvation** mentioned in verse 19. This means that 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. But if we magnify Christ in sufferings, we shall experience this salvation.

THE KEY TO PAUL'S EXPERIENCE

The key to Paul's **experience of salvation** was the **bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ**. Everything that happened to Paul **turned out to salvation** through this bountiful supply. 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. (Life-Study of Philippians, Chapter 7, Section 1)

CHRIST MAGNIFIED

Through the **bountiful supply** of the Spirit, **Christ is magnified in us**. What Paul speaks of in **1:20** is the **magnification of Christ**, but in **2:16** he speaks of **holding forth the word of life**. **Holding forth** the word of life is **equal** to **magnifying Christ**. Christ Himself is the word of life. We hold forth the word of life, and this word is Christ. (Life-Study of Philippians, Chapter 35, Section 2)

Strictly speaking, Philippians is a book **not only** on the **experience** of Christ but also on the **enjoyment** of Christ. In **Philippians 3:8** Paul says that for the sake of Christ he **counted all things as refuse**. This is not only a matter of experience but also a matter of enjoyment. The **excellency of the knowledge of Christ (v. 8)** also indicates enjoyment. **Excellency** is **not mainly** for **experience** but for **enjoyment**. In chapter 3 Paul seemed to be saying, "Formerly, I, Saul of Tarsus, enjoyed my status. I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews and a Pharisee. But now I count all things loss for Christ." The **refuse, the dog food**, mentioned in **verse 8**, indicates **no enjoyment**. No human being can have enjoyment from dog food. Therefore, the book of Philippians is concerned not only with the experience of Christ but also with the enjoyment of Christ. With the enjoyment of Christ there is a pleasant taste.

Although the Philippians were good, they had **lost** their enjoyment of Christ. They may have **had a proper spirit**, **but** there was a **problem in their soul**. They might have been **one in spirit**, but they were **definitely not one in soul**. This is the background of this Epistle.

Every Epistle in the New Testament was written for a particular reason. The reason for writing the Epistle to the Philippians was that, **although they were for the Lord and cared for His servant and were very good in their spirit, they had a problem in their soul because they did not think the same thing**. In their thinking they had a problem. Hence, Paul wrote this Epistle to advise them and even to beg them to be one in soul. (The Experience of Christ, Chapter 3, Section 2)

II. Philippians unveils that the **experience** of Christ is our **fellowship** unto the furtherance of the gospel until the Lord Jesus comes back—1:3-6:

- A. From the time that we are saved until the time the Lord Jesus comes back, our **Christian life should be a gospel-preaching life**:
 1. The Christ-experiencing and -enjoying life **is a life** in the **furtherance of the gospel**, a gospel-preaching life, **not** individualistic **but** corporate; 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**.
 2. Whether we speak or remain silent, our life, our living, our being, and **our entire person must be a preaching of Christ**.
- B. Paul charges us to **conduct ourselves** "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ," which is to "stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel"—v. 27:
 1. To be **with one soul** and to **be like-souled** for the gospel work are more difficult than to be in one spirit for the experience of Christ—2:20-21, 30.
 2. To be **with one soul** requires that, after having been regenerated in our spirit, we go further to be transformed in our soul—2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 12:2.
 3. **If** we are not one in our affections, thoughts, and decisions, we are not with one soul; **as long** as we are not one in soul, we are not in the fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel, and our conduct is not worthy of the gospel.
 4. **When** all the members in the church are **in one spirit with one soul**, this oneness will be convincing, subduing, and attractive, and **we will experience Christ and enjoy Him**.

FELLOWSHIPPING IN THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL

The church in Philippi also had **fellowship** with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel. In 1:5 Paul speaks of "*your fellowship unto the gospel from the first day until now*." **Fellowship** here means "**participation, communication**." The same Greek word is translated "**contribution**" in Romans 15:26 and "**sharing**" in **Hebrews 13:16**. The saints in Philippi had fellowship unto the gospel, participating in the furtherance of the gospel through the apostle Paul's ministry. This **participation included their financial contributions** to the apostle (4:10, 15-16), which **issued** in the **furtherance of the gospel**. This kind of fellowship, which **kept them from being individualistic** and diversely minded, implies their oneness 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. **The Christ-experiencing-and-enjoying life is a life in the furtherance of the gospel, a gospel-preaching life, not individualistic but corporate**. Hence, there is "the fellowship unto the gospel." 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.

As the Philippian believers were **sharing** in the furtherance of the gospel, in the furtherance of **God's move on earth** according to His economy, they were partakers with Paul of grace. Those who partake of grace are those who share and enjoy the processed Triune God as grace. The apostle was such a one in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, and the saints at Philippi were **joint-partakers** with him in this grace. **Grace** is the Triune God processed to be our enjoyment. By having **fellowship unto the gospel with** Paul, the Philippians **enjoyed** this grace. According to the expression in Greek, they became **partakers** of Paul's grace, of the very grace he enjoyed. (Life-Study of Philippians, Chapter 2, Section 2)

III. Strictly speaking, Philippians is a book **not only on the experience of Christ but also on the enjoyment of Christ**:

- A. Since Philippians is **concerned** with the **experience** and **enjoyment** of Christ, which issue in joy, it is a book **filled** with **joy** and **rejoicing**—1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17-18, 28-29; 3:1; 4:1, 4.
- B. The **experience** of Christ is primarily **in our spirit**, but the **enjoyment** of Christ is **in our soul**; like children who are made to eat without enjoying their food, many times we experience Christ without enjoying Him.
- C. Thus, we can have the experience of Christ without the enjoyment of Christ; the problem here is **with our soul**—our mind, emotion, and will.
- D. “I am somewhat concerned that you may not have very much enjoyment of Christ” (*The Experience of Christ*, p. 29); the reason that many lose the enjoyment of Christ is the problem they have in the soul; **if** you do not have much enjoyment of Christ, it **indicates** that you are not one in soul, joined in soul (2:2).
- E. Among the Philippians there was **dissension** in their thinking (4:2), which troubled the apostle; hence, he asked them to **think the same thing, even the same one thing**, that they might make his joy full (2:2):
 1. According to the context of this book, **the one thing** must refer to the **subjective knowledge and experience** of Christ (v. 2; 1:20-21; 2:5; 3:7-9; 4:13); Christ, and Christ alone, should be the **centrality** and **universality** of our entire being.
 2. The one thing is the subjective experience of Christ **as our** enjoyment for the **church life**, the Body life; **this one thing should occupy our mind all the time**; if we think the one thing, immediately the enjoyment of Christ will be our portion.
 3. **Our thinking should be focused on the excellency of the knowledge and experience of Christ** (3:8, 10); focusing on anything else causes us to think differently, thus creating dissensions among us.
 4. To think something other than the one thing is to rebel against God’s economy; **God’s economy** is that **we think the one thing**.
 5. Because of the **dissension** in their thinking, the Philippian believers had different levels of love (2:2); they did not have the same love toward all the saints for the keeping of oneness; if our love toward the saints has been regulated and dealt with, then we will enjoy Christ as we love the saints.
 6. Being **one in soul, joined in soul**, is **not only** for the experience of Christ **but even more** for the **enjoyment** of Christ; our **experience** of Christ **should also be an enjoyment** of Christ.
 7. **To experience Christ with enjoyment, we need to be in one spirit with one soul; in order to enjoy Christ, we need to have a proper soul, a “co-soul” that is one with the souls of other saints.**
 8. **The most important thing** for us to do is to **experience** Christ as our **enjoyment** today so that the church may be built up for His glory; this is the way for us to **be preserved** in the Lord’s recovery until He comes back.

Philippians gives us **four aspects** concerning the experience of Christ.

Manifesting Christ in Our Environment through the Bountiful Supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

The **first aspect** is **in** our **environment**, in our **circumstances**. The apostle said that whether through life or through death he was bold, as always, to have Christ **magnified** in his body. He also said that he had **learned**, in whatever circumstances he was, to **be content** and that he could do all things in Christ. This shows that the apostle experienced Christ in any kind of environment. How? He said that it was **through** the **bountiful supply** of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Preaching the Gospel to Sinners by Exercising the Spirit

The **second aspect** is to **manifest** Christ to sinners **in preaching the gospel**. This is to **be in one spirit, with one soul striving** together for the **advancement** of the gospel, as referred to in 1:27. If we want to manifest Christ, we must not forget the preaching of the gospel, and we must preach by exercising the spirit. For Christ to be magnified in any circumstance we need to preach the gospel to sinners by exercising our spirit. Without preaching the gospel, we will be short of one aspect in our experience of Christ.

Fellowshipping with the Saints in Spirit

The **third aspect** is to **have fellowship with the saints in spirit**. We are members one of another, and we are brothers and sisters one to another. This is **not** a matter of friendship, **nor** a matter of a meeting of the minds, nor a matter of being fellow countrymen or fellow alumni. These relationships are of the flesh. Our fellowship is **not** in these relationships **but in spirit**.

Serving God by the Spirit

The **fourth aspect** is to **serve God by the Spirit**. The first aspect covered in Philippians is that the Spirit is for our **situations**, another aspect is that the Spirit is for the **gospel**, still another aspect is that the Spirit is for **fellowship**, and the final aspect is that the Spirit is for **service**. We have these four aspects: **toward** the environment, **toward** sinners, **toward** the saints, and **toward** God. (The Spirit in the Epistles, Chapter 7, Section 3)