

Message One

The Intrinsic Significance of the Experience of Christ

Hymns:

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

- Phil 1:3 I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you,
Phil 1:4 Always in my every petition on behalf of you all, making my petition with joy,
Phil 1:5 For your fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now,
Phil 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;
Phil 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,
Phil 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.
Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
Phil 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,
Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,
Phil 2:20 For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;
Phil 2:21 For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.
Phil 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.
Phil 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.
Phil 4:1 So then, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, in the same way stand firm in the Lord, beloved.
Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

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.
- Col 2:2 That their hearts may be comforted, they being knit together in love and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, unto the full knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ,
Eph 3:4 By which, in reading it, you can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ,
- 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.
- Eph 3:19a And to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ,
- 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.

- Phil 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.
- 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.
- Phil 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,
- Phil 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.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...
- 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.
- Matt 18:21 Then Peter came and said to Him, Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?
- Matt 18:22 Jesus said to him, I do not say to you, Up to seven times, but, Up to seventy times seven.
- 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.
- 2 Cor 12:7 And because of the transcendence of the revelations, in order that I might not be exceedingly lifted up, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, that he might buffet me, in order that I might not be exceedingly lifted up.
- 2 Cor 12:8 Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me.
- 2 Cor 12:9 And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore I will rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ might tabernacle over me.
- 2 Cor 12:10 Therefore I am well pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions and distresses, on behalf of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am powerful.
- 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.
- 1 Tim 3:15 But if I delay, I write that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.
- 1 Tim 3:16 And confessedly, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the flesh, /Justified in the Spirit, /Seen by angels, /Preached among the nations, /Believed on in the world, /Taken up in glory.
- 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.
- Phil 1:21a For to me, to live is Christ ...

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:

Phil 1:3 I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you,
 Phil 1:4 Always in my every petition on behalf of you all, making my petition with joy,
 Phil 1:5 For your fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now,
 Phil 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;

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:

Phil 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,

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.

Phil 2:20 For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you;

Phil 2:21 For all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.

Phil 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.

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.

2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

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.

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.

Phil 1:4 Always in my every petition on behalf of you all, making my petition with joy,

Phil 1:18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truthfulness, Christ is announced; and in this I rejoice; yes, and I will rejoice;

Phil 1:25 And being confident of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith,

Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

Phil 2:17 But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice, and I rejoice together with you all.

Phil 2:18 And in like manner you also rejoice, and you rejoice together with me.

Phil 2:28 I have sent him therefore the more eagerly, so that when you see him again, you may rejoice and I may be less sorrowful.

Phil 2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honor,

Phil 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.

Phil 4:1 So then, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, in the same way stand firm in the Lord, beloved.

Phil 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

- 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).

Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

- 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):

Phil 4:2 I exhort Euodias, and I exhort Syntyche, to think the same thing in the Lord.

Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

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.

Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

Phil 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.

Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Phil 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus,

Phil 3:7 But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ.

Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ

Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,

Phil 4:13 I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.

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.

Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ

Phil 3:10 To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,

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.

Phil 2:2 Make my joy full, that you think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking the one thing,

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.