



## Philippians Masterclass

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## 3.0 Overview Part 1

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### 3.1 A Father's Heart (1<sup>3-10</sup>)

The first section of the letter deals with Paul's opening greetings which follow the same pattern as his other letters. It is from here that Paul launches straight into thanks for his dearest friends. He cannot help but break out in thanks for them and each thanksgiving is as Peterson puts it, "... a trigger to prayer"<sup>1</sup>

Ever since that day he came across women meeting in the town and he preached the gospel to them at the cost of his own freedom, Paul was a father to the saints at Philippi. They were always in his heart no matter where he was.

#### 3.1.1 Paul's Joy (3-5)

So when Paul prayed for the Philippians he did so with a smile on his face. Philippians has often been described as an Epistle of JOY.

Our modern English translations lose a little of Paul's meaning. The NIV renders this *every time I remember you*, whereas Paul was not saying that he burst out in praise at every remembrance but at ALL remembrance of them<sup>2</sup>, in other words there was nothing in his past with these saints that caused him regret – only good memories<sup>3</sup>.

 **Do we pray with a smile on our face for others?**

What is the source of Paul's joy? It is the Philippians' faithfulness as his partners in the work of the gospel. This is why Paul says from the first day until now – this was perhaps a period of over ten years during which the Philippians had remained faithful to Paul and supported him and had been united with him in his circumstances. We learn later in the letter that the persecution which Paul experienced in Philippi did not seem to abate when Paul left, so it seems they took on his martyr's mantle when he left – which perhaps was the beginning of forging their strong bond.

#### 3.1.2 Paul's Confidence (5-6)

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<sup>1</sup> The Message, Philippians 1<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word here, *pas* - often translated *every* has the idea of "whole".

<sup>3</sup>Endnotes

Wuest's Word Studies From the Greek New Testament: Wuest, Kenneth S © 1942 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

So why was Paul so confident? This was a combination of his close bond with them, but also because of the author of their faith – God himself. It is the fact that God began the work in them that gives him confidence it will be finished.

### ... Cross Reference

“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”

### 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Even after so many years in the faith together, Paul’s confidence was not just in their faithfulness but in the faithfulness of God in completing this great work of salvation in them.

Here Paul introduces the idea of running in a race, competing for a prize, which he himself is still seeking<sup>4</sup>. The Holy Spirit living within them is the guarantee that Paul sees in each one of them. Paul is father to them but also coach alongside them urging them on!

### 3.1.3 Paul’s Love? <sup>(7-8)</sup>

Here we come to something truly amazing that Paul reveals about himself. Before we describe what that is, note the father-like heart of Paul ...

*“It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart.”<sup>5</sup>*

In the original Greek this could just as easily be translated *I am in your heart*.<sup>6</sup> And this demonstrates the bond between Paul and these men and women in Philippi. The word *feel* above (sometimes translated think) really means when someone constantly has their mind directed in a practical way in the good interest of someone<sup>7</sup>. As their spiritual father this was his way with them.

### Are we “fathering” those younger in the faith?

- Fathering

Those of us who have been in Christ for many years should look to Paul as an example of a father. Are we fathering any younger members of the

<sup>4</sup> Philippians 3<sup>14</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Philippians 1<sup>3</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

faith, and like Paul, holding them in our hearts? If not, we should not wait for them to fall into our lap; after all, natural children have to be sought in the sense that they require certain acts to bring them about. Then likewise for some of us this will mean praying to the LORD and asking him to give us spiritual children – for some of us he is waiting for us to do this so we can begin to pour ourselves out into their lives and in turn receive fresh water from him, for the next step of our journey. This role is not reserved just for those in recognised leadership.

- The Very Heart of Christ

And now we come to the amazing statement of Paul,

*“God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.”*<sup>8</sup>

Again let us go back to the Greek to find out what Paul is really saying here: *Splagchnon* ... (KJV translates as “bowels”) referring to the heart, lungs, liver, etc. For Paul, these were a metaphor for the seat of the emotions, as we use the picture of a heart for the same purpose today. Here is what is amazing: the structure of Paul’s statement means that he is not talking about his own affection or longing, as if it was his own emotion – but instead he is referring to Christ’s longing, as if the very heart of Christ dwelt in Paul!!<sup>9</sup> That great Christian Commentator Bishop Lightfoot writes on this passage thus,

*“The believer has no yearnings apart from his Lord; his pulse beats with the pulse of Christ; his heart throbs with the heart of Christ.”*<sup>10</sup>

This is the only way Paul or any of the rest of the Saints can really, truly love – like Jesus. This is why elsewhere Paul tells the Saints,

*“And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”*<sup>11</sup>

- New Hearts ~ Changed Minds

This brings us to an important area of our thinking. There is an important distinction between our hearts and minds, that if we observe will serve us well in our relationships with others, particularly in this area of fathering.

Let’s look at some of the things that we see in the Scriptures concerning the heart of man ...

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<sup>8</sup> Philippians 1<sup>8</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> The Epistles of St Paul, III The First Roman Captivity (i. Epistle to the Philippians): Lightfoot, J B © 1883 Macmillan and Co. London

<sup>11</sup> Romans 5<sup>5</sup>



*“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”<sup>12</sup>*

This looks like a terminal condition in the natural heart of man that surgery cannot cure! God’s solution is a new heart for every man or woman that wants one. Israel’s promise was hard heartedness and God’s promise was a new heart for them if they wanted it,

*“Rid yourselves of all the offences you have committed, and get a new **heart** and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?”<sup>13</sup>*

*“I will give you a new **heart** and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your **heart** of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”<sup>14</sup>*

**This is how we love with the love of Jesus – because he has changed our hearts of stone for hearts of flesh.** But what about our minds? Here we need to distinguish what God has done and is doing in us. Again let us go back to the Scriptures,

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your **mind**. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”<sup>15</sup>*

Believers are urged throughout the New Testament, to set our minds on things above, to ensure our minds are controlled by the Spirit. The mind is physical – grey matter and therefore cannot be changed in the twinkling of an eye – because God is not in the brainwashing business - but must be trained to think in Godly ways.

Understanding this will not only help us to understand some of our own problems, which can come from wrong thinking, but also to help others. Our minds may not always think of others, but at the same time that great love of Christ is still beating away in our hearts.

To summarise then, when we were saved from sin, we were *transferred* (NKJV *conveyed*) from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God<sup>16</sup>, i.e., we were re-positioned – a geographical move. He also gave us new hearts and also his mind<sup>17</sup>. However this latter exchange of the mind is one which takes a lifetime to implement as thought-processes and mental habits are changed and the mind *trained in the way it should go*. **The process of Sanctification is a filtering of Christ-likeness from our hearts to our minds.**

<sup>12</sup> Jeremiah 17<sup>9</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ezekiel 18<sup>31</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Ezekiel 36<sup>26</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Romans 12<sup>1</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Colossians 1<sup>13</sup>

<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 2<sup>16</sup>

### 3.1.4 Paul's Hope? <sup>(9-10)</sup>

Paul gives us another insight into his character and attitude to the whole church. He summarises his prayer for the Philippians.

**“that your love may abound more and more ...”**

Love is the driving force in our lives. We find this in Paul's exhortation to the *Colossians*. He instructs his readers to put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Over all these virtues he tells them to put on love, as this binds them all together in unity.

Love is like an overcoat which can be put on over undergarments and which binds them. It goes around all the other virtues like a huge overcoat.<sup>18</sup> Paul knew this and prayed accordingly for the Philippians – he knew love would protect their hearts through the persecution they suffered.

**“... in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best ...”**

Knowledge and Insight is the key to channelling our love into those things which God wants us to; helping us not to be distracted or discouraged as we focus on the true goal. As Eugene Peterson puts it so well in the Message, “... that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush.”

<sup>18</sup> Colossians 3<sup>12-14</sup>

**“...and may be pure<sup>19</sup> and blameless until the day of Christ,”**

One area in which we really need to learn from the early church was their sense of the coming Day of the Lord. Everything that we do should always be set against this background. We, and the people for whom we choose to pray and father are “works in progress” and shall be presented to the King.

**“...filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.”**

Paul saw them as objects built for the glory of God. He could see the finished product and that raised his expectations and his prayer for them.

Here we find guidelines on how we should pray for others. Pray firstly that they may abound, have an excess of God’s agape<sup>20</sup> love. But we also need to pray that God will help them to learn to be discerning with that love. As Paul said of his fellow countrymen,

*“For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.”<sup>21</sup>*

They were not lacking enthusiasm, but this was not tempered with knowledge and led them astray so that they missed what God had for them. This word (epignosis) Paul uses of Israel, he also uses here in his prayer. In Greek it meant knowledge gained through experience and the word he uses for insight (aesthesis) meant sensitive moral perception<sup>22</sup> and a quickness of ethical tact. These two would help them discern what was best by experience. The two qualities would work in tandem like guide ropes, guiding them in the right direction toward the throne of God. As Wuest summarises,

<sup>19</sup> *Heilikrines*: - This word derives from two other Greek words Heile (meaning the Sun’s ray) and *Krino* (meaning to judge), so it may have referred to that which can stand up to scrutiny in the Sun’s light. This lends itself to the idea later in the same verse of presentation before Christ at the end of time.

<sup>20</sup> “*Agape and agapao are used in the N.T. (a) to describe the attitude of God toward His Son, John 17:26; the human race, generally, John 3:16; Rom 5:8; and to such as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly, John 14:21; (b) to convey His will to His children concerning their attitude one toward another, John 13:34, and toward all men, I Thess. 3:12; I Cor 16:14, 2 Pet 1:7; (c) to express the essential nature of God, 1 John 4:8. Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, Rom. 15:2, and works no ill to any, 13:8-10; love seeks opportunity to do good to ‘all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith,’ Gal. 6:10. See further I Cor. 13 and Col 3:12-14.” - Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words © 1985 Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers*

<sup>21</sup> Romans 10<sup>2</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Vincent’s Word Studies of the New Testament



*“The full knowledge which these Philippians needed to gain by experience was a better understanding of God’s WORD as translated into their experience ... when a Christian has put the WORD of God into practice in his life, then he has what Paul is talking about here. This is the difference between a young convert and a mature believer.”<sup>23</sup>*

Finally, Paul’s goal always was their presentation on the day of Christ. This was one of his motivations in the way he prayed for and looked after others which was not limited to the Philippians. His heart was, as Jesus’ was, for the church as a whole, that it may be presented as a spotless bride.

You see if our focus is just on individuals then we can become bogged down when they let us down or walk away from God. We can become disillusioned by their lack of progress or responsiveness to ours and/or God’s input into their lives. If however our focus and passion is for his church then we shall always see the spotless bride – the big picture – instead of the details and problems and this will always be our motivation in our intercession for the saints of God.

## 3.2 The Uncontainable Gospel (1<sup>12-26</sup>)

Paul now chooses to give the Saints an update on his position of imprisonment and what God was doing through this situation: he was in chains for Christ<sup>24</sup>.

### 3.2.1 The Power of the Gospel

#### ... Cross Reference

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the **power** of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”

**Romans 1:16-17**

This great gospel of ours is a work of divine genius. You might say, as men we could not have made it up if we had tried! In fact apart from the accomplishment of Jesus announced by the gospel it has other properties, one of which we find Paul showing us through his own experience.

What is “the gospel”? The Gospel (Gk. *Evangelion*) simply means “good news or tidings” about Jesus. However this good news is powerful and we find something

<sup>23</sup> Wuest’s Word Studies From the Greek New Testament: Wuest, Kenneth S © 1942 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

<sup>24</sup> Philippians 1<sup>13</sup>

interesting in Paul's letter to the Romans about the gospel itself. Paul doesn't here state that it is the death and resurrection of Christ which is the power of God for the salvation of all who believe, but the gospel.

### ... Cross Reference

“For the message of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

#### **Romans 1:16-17**

Surely this is splitting hairs you may say?! After all, surely the gospel is synonymous with Christ's death and resurrection? However the gospel is the announcement of this wonderful accomplishment; it is the declaration of what has happened; the trumpet call to all men and women everywhere. It is not the victory or provision itself, but simply God's announcement of what he has done and an invitation to all who wish to respond. So this announcement of good news carries power in itself. When the gospel is introduced into society something explosive happens. It's like a chemical reaction when one element is introduced to another. The gospel is like a chemical that will react with every other chemical it comes into contact with. It is offensive to every environment into which it is introduced except that in which it already prevails. It is this way by the very design of God himself.

### **3.2.2 Turning the Tables on Sin**

This reaction had taken place where Paul was imprisoned. What the enemy had intended to hinder the gospel had actually served to prosper it ever more greatly. Here we find the gospel turning the tables on sin.

In his letter to the Romans we find that Paul talks about sin almost as if it's alive; he personifies it when talking about it. Observe,

*“Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.”*

<sup>25</sup>

Apart from the law sin is dead, Paul says immediately before the above. It was the introduction of law which sin seized upon to bring death to us. Again it was almost like a chemical reaction when law was imposed, sin abounded all the more. However the law, Paul goes on to say, is good<sup>26</sup> – it is sin that works its deception using the good law for its own ends.

<sup>25</sup> Romans 7<sup>9-11</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Romans 7<sup>12</sup>

This is why when something is forbidden sin works its way into human hearts making it look all the more desirable.

Likewise the gospel feeds upon opposition. When men try to stifle the message and crush it, the gospel seizes upon this opportunity to propagate itself in men's hearts all the more. This is why we cannot legislate a Christian State today – the power of the gospel cannot be enforced by legislation – its power is shown when it comes into contact with men's hearts and the more the enemy tries to crush it, the more it flourishes – as the Jews and then the Romans found out for themselves.

So you see God was rather clever by investing everything in this powerful announcement. Just as sin prospered in the context of the law, so the gospel flourishes all the more in the face of persecution.

This is further evidenced by Paul's almost strangely relaxed approach to those preaching the gospel in the void left by Paul's imprisonment. Paul doesn't say that they are preaching *another gospel* as he did in the case of the Galatians, so we can only assume that although some of these other preachers were doing so from less than pure motives they were at least preaching the gospel of Christ – and again it is the power of the gospel – that produces results not the men who were preaching it!

This should also be an encouragement to those less eloquent in the preaching of the gospel. The gospel has the power to move men's hearts. It is a triumph of content over style. Although the way we present the gospel is important, especially in the Western world where blasé is the order of the day – nevertheless we should never lose sight of the power contained in this wonderful gospel.

### 3.3 The Uncontainable Believers (1<sup>12-26</sup>)

We have looked at the effects of opposition and persecution on the gospel, but what about the believer? Paul and the Philippians knew what persecution was like – we looked earlier on at how the persecution that began when the gospel was first announced in Philippi never really abated for the church whose seeds were sown that day. It was a church that grew up under persecution. Their boldness was fuelled by the realisation in the believers' hearts that nothing can stop the power of the gospel.

#### 3.3.1 Fearless and Committed

Paul speaks of the effects of his imprisonment on his brothers in Christ who preached all the more in love. We have nothing to fear from persecution as it

only makes the believer stronger. Where the gospel is opposed it thrives all the more and so do the men and women whose hearts are persuaded by it.

### 🤔 How does the enemy try to intimidate us today?

When opposition comes it cures the believer of any lethargy because he or she is forced to nail their colours to the mast! When the stakes go up, the Christian is forced to ask where his or her heart truly lies; what really are life's priorities.

It is the believers' lack of fear that shows the enemy their defeat is assured as Paul tells the Philippians in this section of the letter,

*"... without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved - and that by God."<sup>27</sup>*

On a conscious or subconscious level the enemy always knows that their defeat and destruction will always be their end – like a cornered animal this simply makes their opposition fiercer.

### 3.3.2 The Head not the Tail

The enemy can therefore be intimidating and will often hit hard and fast to crush the work of Christ. This was typified throughout the WORD of God by those great symbols of the enemy, Pharaoh and Herod.

The enemy will always try to crush the seed, as God announced in Genesis, but the seed is destined to crush the enemy's head<sup>28</sup>.

Likewise believers are called to be the head and not the tail. In the face of opposition we are called to be more than conquerors<sup>29</sup>. As Paul tells the saints in Rome, they are called to be more than conquerors through Christ, because of the believers' knowledge that nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

*"And I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."*

*"The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them."*

<sup>27</sup> Philippians 1<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Genesis 3<sup>15</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Romans 8<sup>37-38</sup>

### ... Cross Reference

“When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.”

**Matthew 2:16**

### Group Activity

We have touched upon the recurring prophetic pattern in the WORD of God concerning the Seed and the Serpent, finding its beginnings in the curse of Genesis 3.

Breaking down into small groups of four or five, try and think of other places in the WORD of God where this is played again, that is to say, the Serpent attacks the Seed.

In each case identify the characters involved and try to pinpoint the relevant references in the WORD of God (if applicable). If possible try to describe in each case what the purpose or aim is of the Serpent’s actions. Remember that the Serpent does not always attack directly himself.

*Some suggestions are in Appendix Two.*

### 3.3.3 Unified in Covenant

The other main theme we can see from Paul’s exhortations to the Philippians is the need for unity in the face of such opposition. Indeed Paul’s own confidence comes in part from his Covenant bond with the Philippians,

*“Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.”<sup>50</sup>*

There is no doubt that Paul took great comfort in their support. They shared a Covenant bond which gave him cause to rejoice. This was also a signal to the enemy that God was amongst them and would ensure their victory over the enemy.

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<sup>50</sup> Philippians 1<sup>9</sup>

## 🤔 What is our starting point for Unity amongst today?

Notice that the unity is gospel-centric; Paul tells them to contend as one man for the faith of the gospel. Earlier in the letter Paul shows us that for him the key thing in all his circumstances and those of his competitors is the furtherance of the gospel. The place for the church to start today in being united, is the gospel itself. We need to put the peripheral things aside and agree on the gospel as laid out by Peter on that great day at Pentecost – so that we are united *in purpose*.

Here is an echo of that description of the disciples in wait for the Spirit at Pentecost,

*“They all **joined together** constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.”<sup>31</sup>*

The word *together* here, Greek *omathumadon* (*ομαθυμαδον*), means literally *same mind* and in this context we see they were praying toward the same goal – it is unity in purpose. So important is this word that we here quote from Thayer’s definition: -

*“ ... **with one mind, with one accord, with one passion** - a unique Greek word, used in 10 of its 12 New Testament occurrences in the Book of Acts, helps us understand the uniqueness of the Christian community. *Omathumadon* is a compound of two words meaning to “rush along” and “in unison”. The image is almost musical; a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonize in pitch and tone. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concertmaster, so the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ’s church.”<sup>32</sup>*

Their fellowship with Paul and with Christ in suffering for the gospel provided them with endurance to keep running the race and not to give up<sup>33</sup>, whatever the opposition, whatever the cost.

### 3.3.4 Ready to Go ~ Willing to Stay!

Within this passage we come to one of the most remarkable parts of the letter, namely Paul’s readiness to depart this world or to remain, whichever profits the Kingdom of God most. We shall return to this passage later in our studies, when we look at the characters but needless to say Paul shows us his lack of ties to this world. He states later in the letter that he has learned to be content with much and with little<sup>34</sup>. Paul was “ready to go” at any time.

<sup>31</sup> Acts 1<sup>16</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The Online Bible Thayer’s Greek Lexicon and Brown Driver & Briggs Hebrew Lexicon, Copyright (c)1993

<sup>33</sup> Galatians 6<sup>9</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Philippians 4<sup>12</sup>

Now it is easy to say to ourselves at this point, *well, this man was obviously single with no family and writing from a position of imprisonment where his fate was perhaps in doubt anyway*. In fact many have made such an argument to prevent uncomfortable comparisons between Paul and the believer.

### **Have we packed our bags? Are we ready to go?**

However we can see that Paul was in fact hopeful of release. He was not despairing and therefore more accepting of death etc. No, Paul was so close to his Lord that *above all else* he longed to lay his head on the bosom of Christ as the Apostle John had done all those years before. He longed to fall at his feet in worship. Perhaps he always wondered what it was like for his John, who had the privilege of *handling him*<sup>35</sup> - the very Source of Life itself?!

Part of this heart-attitude comes from the early church's belief in the imminence of Christ's return. They always talked of the Day of the LORD approaching – it kept them ready for such a day. After two thousand years have do we still feel that immanency? We are closer now than ever!

Nevertheless, Paul's overriding desire was the exaltation of Christ in his body – be that in his life or his death. He would do anything to see Christ glorified through himself. But that wasn't the sum of his reasoning in this matter; look carefully at his words: -

*“Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.”*<sup>36</sup>

### **Do we often deprive the Body of our presence and blessing?**

Paul understood that his presence blessed the church and edified it (cf. 1 Corinthian 14). Because of this he realised that he did not have a right to deprive the body of this blessing, except if God be glorified more by his *not being around anymore* (- the Greek tense used here denotes not the act of dying but the consequence of dying, i.e., the state *after* death and hence in layman's terms *not being around any more*).

<sup>35</sup> 1 John 1<sup>1</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Philippians 1<sup>25-26</sup>

## The Intermediate State

This is one of the key verses in the New Testament, where the doctrine of the intermediate state is established: - “I desire to depart and be with Christ” (v.23)

It is surprising just how many Christians are not clear on this matter, which may affect them should they die before Jesus returns. Combining this with other Scriptures we can see what happens to such believers: -

- Death divorces us from our bodies and we clearly go to be with Jesus. The word Paul uses here for depart is from a Greek word used of loosing a ship from its moorings. We know Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14<sup>2</sup>).
- In his first letter to the church in Thessalonica Paul tells them the order of events when Christ returns (5<sup>13-17</sup>) - the dead in Christ shall rise to meet Christ and then those saints still living will be raised to meet him in the air.
- Paul tells the Corinthians in his first letter (15<sup>51-55</sup>) that we shall then be changed in the twinkling of an eye as our mortal bodies (whatever state they may be in - burned or buried!) shall be clothed in immortality just like Jesus’ was when he was resurrected - the firstborn among many brethren.
- This, Paul tells the saints in Rome, will complete our adoption as ‘sons’ (8<sup>23</sup>). Until then we have but a foretaste of the glorious existence we shall have when our bodies are redeemed from the curse of death, the last enemy to be defeated (1 Corinthians 15<sup>26</sup>)

### 3.3.5 Objects of Glory

This desire of Paul’s to see Christ glorified was borne out of a recognition of Christ’s place in this life ...

*“For to me, to live is Christ”<sup>37</sup>*

This is one the greatest statements in the WORD of God in terms of its significance to the central message of the WORD of God. As the Bible is multi-layered in its meanings and applications, Paul’s statement refer to more than one concept here: -

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<sup>37</sup> Philippians 1<sup>21</sup>



- Life is all about Living for Him

Everything we do in life, we are to do for his glory as unto the LORD. Our lives should be built and centred around this. Although we do things for our own pleasure in the course of our lives, it is glorifying him that pleases us most. As we mature we shall learn to do this in the most mundane things of life, rather than becoming super-spiritual gurus who never have fun!! Like a stick of rock, Jesus runs through our life, with no area left untouched.

- Christ - the Author of the D.N.A. Code

Only recently have we discovered that all life comes from a set of instructions encoded in nucleic acids which originally came from the stars God created in the sky. Our bodies were made from stardust (the raw materials) and God breathed life into us. The DNA instructions laid in all living things means that we were truly created by WORDS!

In his letter to the Colossians, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul tells us how all things in the Universe are actually held together by Jesus: -

#### ... Cross Reference

“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

#### **Colossians 1:16-17**

This phrase here *in him all things hold together* hangs on a Greek word translated hold together - Sunistao (συνίστημι), which comes from two other Greek words: -

**Sun - With**  
**Histemi - Stand Together**

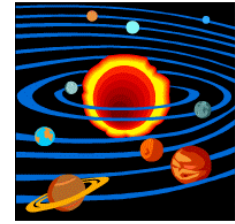
Another way of expressing this combination of words is the word *cohere*, in other words Jesus is the principle of cohesion in the universe<sup>38</sup>. Natural forces such as gravity, which allowed the planets and stars to come together in the first place is simply an expression of his mind.

Here is the extraordinary thing: when he was walking upon this earth as a man, he was actually sustaining it at the same time. So if you can imagine

<sup>38</sup> Hebrews 1<sup>2-3</sup>

him climbing the hills surrounding Galilee being followed by the crowds, as he turned to speak to them they had no idea that the hills were not holding him, but instead he was holding them up!!

When astronauts have ventured outside of the protection of this earth's atmosphere they have often said how hostile the environment is for man. Any closer to the sun and this planet would not be habitable for us. Scientists have discovered that 6,000 km of earth beneath the feet of a man is perfect for creating the right amount of gravity to allow man to walk on two feet, for which he has special gravity sensors in his head.



The more Scientists discover, the more we can see how everything in the Universe is *held-together* in perfect balance. With the discovery DNA and the advance in biological science we have discovered how every cell in our body contains instructions for reproduction which require editing (depending upon which organ in the body is being developed) before being translated and processed by 20,000 “workers” within the cell – atheist

Scientists cannot work out where the power cell (*Mitochondrion*) originally came from which powers the process of reproduction of the cell in the first place (i.e., what powered the creation of the first cell, which in turn reproduced itself !?!).

Further, who programmed the “workers” to interpret the original DNA instruction into a usable alphabet for production in the cell? Each interpreter has its own key depending upon which organ it develops from the edited section of DNA code it is given. The most amazing fact is that without all these intricate parts working together in unison in the cell, reproduction would not take place at all – only a 100% complete cell can naturally reproduce itself<sup>39</sup> – evidence indeed for the Creator, of whom John says,

*“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”*<sup>40</sup>

- Christ Lives Through Us

Coming back to Paul's great statement again, Paul is also alluding to the fact that Jesus lives through us – we are effectively dead people walking around on this earth. The life in us which came from the natural man is now dead and the only life that dwells in us is his life – this comes back to his love beating in our hearts.

<sup>39</sup> It was once argued that cells evolved from viruses that travelled through space, landing on earth by accident. However microbiology has shown that viruses cannot reproduce themselves. They actually invade cells and take over their reproductive systems in order to reproduce themselves and that is how the virus grows and spreads.

<sup>40</sup> John 1<sup>3-4</sup>

### ... Cross Reference

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me...”

#### **Galatians 2:20**

Hence Paul tells the Galatians, who were deceived into trying to live life righteously through the natural law of man again, that they were not living and fulfilling the requirements of righteousness but the Spirit of Christ within them was. It is only when we truly count ourselves dead to sin and our old life that the glory of God truly shines in and through us.

So when Paul said to the Philippians that *for me to live is Christ*, he was saying to them on many levels that they too were objects of glory. Believers whose lives are truly laid down are objects of glory and worthy of presentation before the King on the day of his coming<sup>41</sup>!!

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<sup>41</sup> Philippians 1<sup>0</sup>