

D. The Marks of the Great Christian Believer, 1:20-26

Intro: if a man has ever lived a life of commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ, it was Paul.

Remember, he was in prison facing a capital crime with his deliverance looking almost hopeless.

Death was staring him in the face.

This passage is one of the great passages of Scripture.

- Phil. 1:21 has been adopted by many believers as their life verse.
- Many have committed their lives to pursue either Phil. 1:20 or Phil. 1:21.

This is the personal testimony of Paul: the marks of the great Christian believer.

1. One great expectation and hope: to magnify Christ in his body (v.20).
2. One great commitment in life and death: Christ (v.21).
3. One great dilemma: to live or to depart to be with Christ (v.22-23).
4. One great willingness: to serve sacrificially (v.24-26).

1. Purpose of Believer, Hope: The great Christian believer has only one great expectation and hope...

To magnify Christ in his body.

Philippians 1:20 According to my *earnest expectation* and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death.
A/V I expect and hope that I will not fail Christ in anything but that I will have the courage now, as always, to show the greatness of Christ in my life here on earth, whether I live or die.

1. Note the words "**earnest expectation**".

- It means to gaze into the distance with the head erect and outstretched just like a watchman on a tower.
- It is aiming one's attention at an object with concentration, eagerness, and intensity.
- It is turning the eyes away from everything else and focusing upon one object and one object alone.
- It is total concentration upon a person's desire.

2. Note what Paul's expectation and hope was.

- Remember Paul was in prison being charged with a capital crime which carried the death penalty.
- The one hope of most prisoners would be release from prison or else to have the death penalty reduced to a lesser punishment.
- **But note Paul's "earnest expectation and hope": To magnify Christ in his body.**
- Paul's mind was not upon his terrible plight and circumstances; **it was upon Christ—upon magnifying Christ in his body.**

As a prisoner he wanted to guard his body from...wondering and questioning God

- Becoming discouraged and depressed
- Becoming complacent and lethargic
- Becoming inactive and undisciplined
- Denying and turning away from God
- Reacting and cursing God

Paul knew the weakness of the human body, how it tended toward doubt, questioning, self-centeredness, pride, boasting, self-satisfaction, indulgence, extravagance, habit, lethargy, complacency, laziness, enslavement, bondage, and neglecting and ignoring God.

Since his conversion, Paul had totally committed himself to magnifying Christ.

- And there was only one place where Christ could be *magnified and seen*: that was in his body.
- The only place that men can see Jesus Christ living is in the body or life of a person.
- Jesus Christ was no longer on the earth; therefore, He could not be seen unless Paul and others allowed Christ to magnify Himself through their bodies.
- Paul knew this; therefore, he gave his body to Jesus Christ.

3. Note the reference to "**by life, or by death.**" Paul was facing death.

- He did not know if he was going to die or continue living.
- If he was to be executed, he wanted to be as faithful as ever and to magnify Christ in death.
- If he was to be declared innocent and set free, he wanted to continue to magnify Christ in his body.

4. Note why Paul wanted Christ to be magnified in his body: that he might not be ashamed in anything.

- Paul knew that he was going to face the same thing that every believer is to face: **The judgment seat of Christ.**
- He knew that everyone of us has to give an account for what we have done with our bodies while on earth.
- In fact, it had been only about four years earlier that Paul had written the piercing words:

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, **whether it be good or bad.**

When believers face Christ in judgment, the experience will not necessarily be peaches and cream.

1. There will be some believers who will be ashamed.

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, **and not be ashamed before him at his coming.**

2. There will be some believers who will suffer loss and look like a burned out building.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; **and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.** ¹⁴ If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. ¹⁵ If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

- **This is what Paul meant: He did not want to be ashamed when he stood before Christ.**
- He loved Christ with all of his heart, for Christ had done so much for him.
- Therefore, his one expectation and hope was for Christ to be magnified in his body.
- He wanted Christ to be honored both in his life and in his death.
- Above all, he did not want to be ashamed when he stood before his wonderful Lord.

2. Purpose of Believer: the great Christian believer has one great commitment in life and death—Jesus Christ.

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

1. Paul declares two phenomenal statements: First, "To me to live is Christ."

What did he mean by this? **He meant at least five things.**

a. He presented his body as a living sacrifice to Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, **that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (a/v “reasonable worship”).**

b. Yet he struggled to yield the parts of his body, every member of his body, to Christ as a tool for righteousness

Romans 6:13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

c. He struggled to control his mind—to control every thought and to focus every thought upon Jesus Christ and the great virtues of life.

2 Corinthians 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

d. He committed himself to work for love and justice within all of society.

Matthew 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 22:39 And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

e. He gave his life—every moment of it—to reach and minister to as many people as possible during his journey upon earth.

Questions to Ponder... What does life mean to you? Why are you living? What is your great purpose in life?

1. Are you living for money and possessions (clothes, houses, cars, property)?

- If so, what do you do in a few years when you die—if you escape accident or disease?
- What do you do if you lose it?
- When that day comes—and it is coming, there is nothing in heaven or earth that can stop it—if you have lived for money, what good will it do you?

2. Are you living for comfort (a good job, a nice place to live, plenty to eat, and enough money to do what you desire now and at retirement)?

- If so, what happens when disease or accident or tragedy strikes or old age comes?
- And one or the other is coming. It cannot be stopped. If you have lived for comfort, what good will it do you?

3. Are you living for a position?

- If so, what do you do when you are edged out, removed, demoted, transferred, by-passed, face disease or accident?
- What good will position do you?

4. Are you living for family?

- If so, what do you do when the family has transferred, moved away, or when the various family members die?
- And it happens to everyone of us. What good will family do you when you face Christ?

5. Are you living for recognition, honor, popularity, recreation, gratification, sensuality—whatever?

- What do you do when you face the crises of life and then in the end come face to face with death?

- At that moment if not before, what good will anything on this earth do you?

2. This brings us to the second point of Paul. He declares that "to die is gain."

- He knew better than to base his life upon these things.
- He knew that everything upon earth was aging and passing away including man himself.
- Therefore, Paul reached out for a Savior, a Person who could save him and give him an eternal world that would never age or pass away.
- This is the reason he grabbed hold of Christ.
- Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son whom God sent into the world to reveal the truth of another world to us, a world that is permanent and that has no corruption—no aging—no passing away in it.

Therefore, Paul grabbed hold of Christ when he found out...

- That Christ saved men from sin, death, and condemnation.
- That Christ made it possible for men to live forever with God in a new heavens and earth.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

3. Life of a Believer: A great Christian believer has one great dilemma—to live or to depart and be with Christ.

Philippians 1:22-23 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. ²³ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

The word "depart" is descriptive. It has a twofold meaning that speaks to the believer's heart.

1. It means to break up; to loosen as in breaking camp and loosening the ropes of the tent.

- It is the picture of breaking loose; packing up; and moving on to a new location.
- The same picture is true of the believer when he departs this life.
- He is not ceasing to exist; he is simply breaking loose and moving on to a new campsite, in fact, a perfect campsite.

2. It means to loosen the moorings of a ship, weigh anchor, and set sail for another port.

- Again, the believer does not cease to exist, he simply loosens the moorings of this life, pulls the anchor up, and sets sail for God's eternal presence.

Paul says that he is caught between two great desires:

1. One desire is to live a life of fruitful service for the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. The other desire is to depart and go on to be with Christ which is far better.

The natural mind wonders and questions how a person in his right mind could ever want to go ahead and die.

- The reason is simply answered: the genuine believer does not die; he never tastes death.
- He is transferred into the presence of Christ.
- Immediately—quicker than the blinking of an eye—the believer is transported into the perfect world of God which is named heaven.
- The believer is perfected—never again to experience pain, suffering, sin, corruption, infirmity, weakness, deformity, disappointment, fear, loss, or death.

- He will be perfected to work for Christ throughout the new heavens and earth, and he will serve and worship Christ for ever and ever.
- The promises of God to the believer are phenomenal; they just explode the human mind.

It is for this reason that the believer can declare: "To die is gain."

- There is the promise of never dying and of living forever with Christ.
- There is the promise that is most dear to the heart of every faithful believer, the promise of being with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself forever and ever.

John 14:2-3 In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.

2 Corinthians 5:8 We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷ Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

There is the promise of receiving a glorious body just like our Lord's glorious body.

1 Corinthians 15:50-53 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. ⁵¹ Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

Philippians 3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

There is the promise of being made an heir of God.

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷ And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

There is the promise of ruling and reigning with Christ forever and ever.

Matthew 25:23 His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

Revelation 22:4-5 And they shall see his face; and his name *shall be* in their foreheads. ⁵ And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

Promise after promise could be listed, and reason after reason could be given as to why the faithful believer sometimes aches to go on to be with the Lord.

- The only word that can adequately express all that God has prepared for us who know Him is the word that is the same in all human languages: *Hallelujah!*

Matthew 24:44 Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Mark 13:35 Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning:

Luke 12:35-36 Let your loins be girded about, and *your* lights burning; ³⁶ And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

4. Ministry of Believer—the great Christian believer has one great willingness—to serve sacrificially.

Philippians 1:24-26 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you. ²⁵ And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; ²⁶ That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

This is an interesting statement by Paul.

- Sitting there in prison waiting for the trial which would determine whether he lived or died, something happened to Paul.
- Either through thinking about the needs that existed in the world and in the churches, or through some sense from the Holy Spirit, Paul became convinced that he would be found innocent of the false charges and released from prison.

But note why: it was not for his sake and enjoyment of life, but so that he could continue to minister.

- The point to see is Paul's heart—how it longed to reach people for Christ and to meet the needs of a world that reels under the weight of desperation.