

HIS . . . IN JOYOUS EXPERIENCE

The Christian's Joy Book
Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

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CHAPTER ONE

CHRIST THE LIFE OF LIFE – The Inward Look

Outline

1— The Salutation, 1:1, 2.

- a—By Servants of Jesus Christ (1a),
- b—To Saints in Christ Jesus (1b),
- c—From God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2). Conveying Grace and Peace.

2— Paul the Pastor, 1:3-11.

- a—His Prayerful Remembrance of Them (past) (3-5).
- b—His Confident Expectation for Them (future) (6).
- c—His Loving Devotion to Them (present) (7, 8).
- d—His Prayer for Their Spiritual Progress (9-11).

A four-fold petition: a love so discerning (9) — that they choose only the excellent (10a)—thus being sincere (in character) and without offense (in conduct) (10b)—thus made complete in the fruitage of righteousness (11).

3— Paul the Prisoner, 1:12-30.

His Supreme Concern for the Gospel Outweighs All Other Considerations.

- a—He Rejoices that his Bonds have furthered the Gospel (12-18).

- (1) Giving it Wider Publicity (13).
- (2) Emboldening others to Speak without Fear (14).
- (3) Even though with Mixed and Varying Motives (15-17).
- (4) Nevertheless Christ is Preached (18).

b—He is Care-free whether his Imprisonment Issues in Life or Death (19-24).

(1) In either case Christ shall be Magnified (19, 20).

(2a) To Live is “**Christ**” (21-23)

(2b) To Die is “**To Be with Christ**” (21-23)

(3) While the latter is “**Far Better**” for him (23b), the former is “**More Needful**” for them (24).

c—He is Confident of “**Continuing**” that he may be of Service to them (24-26).

d—He Exhorts them to Stand Fast in the Face of Suffering (27-30).

PHILIPPIANS				
CHRIST IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE				
CHRIST – The Source		MIND – The Channel		
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<u>WHERE</u> HE IS	<u>WITHIN</u> US PERSONAL			
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<u>APPEAL</u>	SURRENDER TO HIM SUFFER FOR HIM			

Sectional Chart – Chapter 1

We are to find and summarize the answer Chapter 1 gives to the three questions set for us in the left-hand column of the chart.

1—WHERE HE IS. This chapter presents Christ as WITHIN US. It is the INWARD LOOK.

Whether Paul speaks of the Philippians' experience of Christ or of his own, the Source of that experience is a Christ dwelling within the heart that believes and trusts Him. We have a Christ PERSONAL to each one of His followers.

It is in this fact that the doctrine of Romans finds its climax—Romans 8. The experience of Philippians begins where the doctrine of Romans leaves off.

Now note carefully: Christ WITHIN is the only place where Christian experience can begin. Many say they believe in Christ. They do believe in the Christ of history— the Christ of Bethlehem, Galilee and Judea, and Calvary— but it is only an HISTORICAL FAITH, just as we believe any fact of history.

I believe that Caesar lived and wrought, but all that I believe of him has never affected or changed my life a particle; he is still back yonder in history. So it is with historical faith in Christ. He remains outside of me, and apart from me—merely an historical personage.

But when I believe ON Him, with a SAVING FAITH. He more than saves me; He moves into my life and becomes a part of me. This is the beginning of Christian experience. There is no substitute.

Dear reader, do you know this personal Christ? Has He come in? And coming in, has He opened this fountain of the experience of Himself in your nature?

“Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be IN HIM a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). That is, from “within him.”

As this tact unfolds in experience, how wondrously PERSONAL He becomes. Christ is in Heaven; yes. Christ is common to all Christians; yes. But—He is mine. He is all mine, personal to me. As I kneel in prayer, though a thousand others be similarly engaged, I do not share my Christ with them, claiming but a thousandth of His thought, His time, attention and love. I have it all, undivided. He is mine, all mine. Yet this is just as true in the experience of the other thousand, if they are truly His. How wonderful!

2. WHAT HE IS. There within He is OUR LIFE. See 1:21.

In salvation He imparts His life to us—we who were “**dead in trespasses and sins**”; now WE LIVE IN HIM. But by His indwelling presence He imparts Himself to us; now HE LIVES IN US. And that for practical purposes. He becomes the ROOT of our living, and we say with Paul, “. . . **not I [that live], but Christ that liveth in me**” (Galatians 2:20). Life finds a new center, takes on a new purpose in its outgoings. It views everything from a new focal-point. “**For to me to live is Christ**” (1:21).

That is Christian experience realized. How is it with you, dear reader? Do these words of Paul falter upon your lips for lack of reality? Let Christ be to you both the Source of life and the Center of life's living and you too will soon express your spiritual biography in these self same words.

3. His MIND IN US. He lives in us. Then, He thinks and wills in us. The result—we have His own temper of mind; we are interested in that which interests Him.

Christ's supreme interest is THE GOSPEL. It is the epitome of His incarnation, life, death and present intercession for its furtherance.

This mind is perpetuated in Paul. Personal interests, or reversals in prison, cannot for one moment dislodge it from its dominance of his life. Six times the word “**Gospel**” occurs in the five verses: 5, 7, 12, 17, 27. Still more is his thought saturated with it. Nothing can swerve him from it. It is not only on his mind; it is his mind, even as it is the mind of Christ. It should be the mind of every Christian. It WILL BE as Christ comes to normal experience in us.

1—The Salutation, 1:1, 2

Note

Contrary to his usual custom, Paul does not refer to himself as “an apostle,” but only as a “**SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST**” (1a). This for three reasons:

First, and primarily, he is joined with Timothy in the salutation (see opening words of First and Second Thessalonians for similar variation).

Second, he has no need to defend or exercise his apostolic authority with this Church.

Third, as a servant of Jesus Christ he is at once on common ground with his readers; no barrier of position between them; no reason why they too, as servants, should not share the experience of Christ of which he writes.

“**SAINTS in CHRIST JESUS at PHILIPPI**” (1b). A dual description that tells the whole story. God's people LIVE in Christ; the relationship is VITAL. They RESIDE on earth; the place is INCIDENTAL.

This duality is the key to victorious living. “**In Me . . . peace. In the world . . . tribulation; but . . . I have overcome the world**” (John 16:33). To live in the world is to be subject to its vicissitudes, which are many. To live in Christ, merely resident in the world, is to live in His complete, perpetual victory.

“In” Christ is the key expression of Ephesians, unlocking its lofty teachings. Philippians, following, immediately picks up this heavenly note and carries it into the sphere of earthly living, “at” Philippi or wherever it be.

“**THE BISHOPS AND DEACONS**” (1c). Whatever purpose prompted their special mention as in no other Church Epistle, we are grateful to the Spirit for the knowledge that the Philippian Church was fully manned, that it included men found worthy of these official positions.

“**Bishops**” is used interchangeably with “**Elders**” (Cf. Acts 20:17 with 28; I Timothy 3:1, 2 with 5:17; Titus 1:5, 6 with 7). They, as spiritual “Overseers,” with the Deacons, constituted the local officary.

“**GRACE**” AND “**PEACE**” (2). This is the divine order, never the reverse. There is no peace to a man in his natural state. First he must receive the Grace from God that provided salvation and from the Lord Jesus Christ that purchased it; then follows Peace (Ephesians 2:4-8, 13-15).

The divine order, logical and chronological, is also the experimental.

Comment

HUMILITY OF SERVICE VERSUS PRIDE OF POSITION.

Paul's first word, styling himself a servant, pushing his apostolic position wholly out of sight, opened every heart to a cordial reception of his message. If he was a servant, how much more should they all be. They would grow in Christian grace together.

"Flesh" ever prides itself in position, thus claiming the attention of men, but it is a cheap substitute for spiritual power in service. The Church is languishing under it. The parading of position is a covering for the lack of power. Let service be the criterion—what changes would follow.

It is thoroughly un-Christian as well as un-Christlike. Service is meant to be the Christian criterion of standing: **"Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you"** (John 13:13-15). See also Matthew 20:26-27. And one day, let us note well, the service test will be applied, with startling results:

"But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30).

"His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou 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" (Matthew 25:21).

"JOY" AND "HAPPINESS"—A VITAL DISTINCTION. The

Christian's dual sphere of life, **"in Christ Jesus at . . ."** involves a paradox of experience. He may have Joy in the Lord while utterly lacking in Happiness at (the place of his residence). The paradox rests upon the separateness of the two spheres.

Happiness is external. Etymologically, it is derived from *"happenings."* So is it practically. If the external happenings of life suit us, we say we are "happy." If they shift or become uncertain, we are unhappy. It is a miserable chameleon existence. Yet it is the lot of all who merely live "at" their physical abode.

Joy is inward. It is **"in the Lord"**—in the inner sphere of the heart where He indwells. Its source is spiritual.

Its resources are independent of circumstance. The degree of joy is often heightened and accentuated by the adversity of circumstance.

Nor is this accentuation merely subjective or psychological. “**Joy in the Lord**” is joy from the Lord Himself. He pours in His exhaustless joy at the hour of need. It was so with Paul and Silas suffering in jail at midnight. It was so with thousands of His martyrs, dying in His name, their faces lit up with heavenly light. It has been so with unknown and uncounted multitudes, plodding on against earth's unequal odds.

It is not a call to “Endure” under adversity. That is the best philosophy the world has to offer. Christianity's call is to “**Rejoice**.” And it has a Cause, personal and precious, adequate to secure this effect for all who live in Him.

This distinction is at the root of the bold, positive assertion of Romans 8:28, “**We KNOW that all things work together for good to them that love God.**”

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS THE ONLY KNOWN SOLUTION FOR THE MISERY OF SHIFTING CIRCUMSTANCE. ITS SECRET SPRINGS OF REJOICING ARE ABOVE EARTH'S VICISSITUDES. SHAME ON US, CHRISTIAN BROTHERS, IF WE FAIL TO RADIATE OUR LORD'S PERENNIAL JOY.

2—Paul the Pastor, 1:3-11

Note

Here is an inspired glimpse of a pastor's relation to his people, the more remarkable because Paul had not been locally present with them for ten years.

1. A PAST REMEMBRANCE (3-5). This embraces:

- (a) a thankfulness to God for them;
- (b) a faithfulness in prayer;
- (c) a joyful petitioning on their behalf;
- (d) all rooted in a continuous fellowship in the Gospel.

2. A FUTURE EXPECTATION (6). A pastor's confidence is that, as he works, the Lord works also and will continue His work, carrying it to completion, “**until the day of Jesus Christ.**”

3. A PRESENT DEVOTION (7, 8). He still has them in his pastor-heart (7a). The bond is mutual. As for them, they are fellow-partakers of all his experiences (7b). As for him, he longs for them with a “tender yearning” more than human—that of Jesus Christ in him (8).

4. A PRAYER FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL PROGRESS, athrob with warmth and tenderness, embodies his pastoral concern for them (9-11). *See Outline.*

Comment

WHEN DOES PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITY CEASE?

Ten years had elapsed since Paul ministered among these people. Yet he calls God to witness that in this interval he had not only retained his love for them but had never ceased to pray for them. What a tribute to the pastoral tie! What vitality attaches to it. Ten years separated, yet most truly united.

Have I rightly interpreted my ministerial office? Could God intend that spiritual roots, so richly intertwined through years of sacred intimacy, should suddenly be uprooted by some providential removal, the spiritual ties be severed, the prayer responsibility cease? Never.

The pastoral office, as ordained of God, is perpetual. Its responsibilities know no bounds; they reach into eternity. God grant us hearts, with Paul, large enough to hold the cumulative congregation of the entire span of our ministry, with faithfulness to uphold them in prayer to a triumphant end.

MAKING MINISTERS. Unquestionably these Philippians, by their “**fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now,**” had contributed to Paul's spiritual sturdiness and stoutness of heart to a degree beyond compute. He prized it highly; it was precious to him. But for it he might have failed. What their fellowship did for him was bread cast upon the waters, now returning to them in the experimental truths of this Epistle.

It has ever been so. The writer rejoices to recall the many saints to whom he has ministered, whose deep spiritual life-currents have constantly flowed into his own soul through Christian fellowship, who had the Gospel always upon their hearts, who talked freely of the things of Christ, who prayed as faithfully for him as he for them. Such are a spiritual tonic. They are “the salt” of the present situation in the Church. Should a minister be caught by the insidious under-currents of thought in our day and drift from his Gospel moorings into the “modern” waters of doubt and unbelief, let “**the saints in Christ Jesus**” devote themselves to definite believing prayer, coupled with loving fellowship in spiritual things, and our faithful God will bring him back.

THE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S CONFIDENCE is that results are not limited to his efforts, that as he works Christ works too, and will carry the work to completion (6). It is the confidence of the sower that, as he scatters his seed, God will use soil, sunshine and shower to cause it to spring up into an abundant harvest.

THE SECRET OF PASTORAL SUCCESS lies nowhere so much as in having his people in his heart (7). Genuine love is the price of his success. The mother pays it in the home, and succeeds with her task; he must pay it in his parish.

Through it the mother finds her abundant compensations; so must he—and without them any salary is poor pay. Love is its own reward.

THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER—SINCERITY. From Paul's prayer we select but one word for meditation —“**sincere**” (10).

The Greek is a picture-word, occurring only here. It means “*clear to the light*,” as when one holds up a bottle of honey and the light streams through unobstructed. Subjected to test it is just what it seems to be, genuine through and through. So is the Christian with abounding love in the heart (9), cleansed from within out, conscious of nothing to conceal, an open book of God's grace. He is just what he appears to be; he appears to be just what he is. God give us more through-and-through Christians.

Our word “sincere” tells the same story, though derived through the Latin, from the words “*sine cere*,” meaning “*without wax*.” Its practical derivation was in this way: In the making of furniture, wax was used to fill in pitch-pockets and conceal imperfections. Thus treated, it looked well for sale; but hard usage revealed the covered-up fact— it was “*in-sin-cere*,” not without wax.

So honest dealers came to write upon their wares, “*sine cere*,” the assurance of genuineness, nothing to conceal.

Christian, are you living so close to your Lord, in that fellowship with Him and fellow-believers wherein His blood keeps cleansing from all sin (I John 1:7), that you can write “sincere” over every phase of character and conduct?

3—Paul the Prisoner, 1:12-30

Note

The capabilities of the Christian faith to triumph under all circumstances come into clear relief in Paul's account of his imprisonment. There is here no suggestion of defeat. The body is bound; the spirit is free.

1. His ATTITUDE TOWARD THE GOSPEL (12-18). It has been furthered (12). The Good News has had an unusual hearing (13). It has been preached more boldly (14), even though with a mixture of motives (15-17), yet in it all the magnifying of Christ makes His servant rejoice (18).
2. His ATTITUDE TOWARD OTHERS (15, 16). These men were envious of Paul and preached in a spirit of envy, contention and insincerity, but by it all the servant of Christ was unaffected. **“Great peace have they that love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them.”**
3. His ATTITUDE TOWARD HIMSELF, throughout this narration, is one of self-forgetfulness. It is the priceless by-product of absorbing interest in a great Cause.
4. His ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS RELEASE (19-26). In thought of self (19, 20a)—really forgetfulness of self in zeal for Christ (20b)—he has no choice between life and death (20c). If he lives—to live is Christ (21a). If he dies—it is the gain of being with Christ (21b, 23b), and the prospect arouses in him **“a desire to depart”** (23a).

However, in thought of them, he is left “**in a strait betwixt the two**” possible outcomes. As he considers their need of him (24), he is moved to confidence that he will continue with them for their “**furtherance and joy of faith**” (25), causing them “**to rejoice in Jesus Christ over his coming to them again**” (26).

5. HIS EXHORTATION TO STEADFASTNESS (27-30). “Only”—never mind what happens—the one matter of chief moment is, that their “**walk as citizens**” of the heavenly state be worthy of the Gospel of Christ (27a), that, whatever the Apostle's lot, he may know of their steadfastness, striving together as one man—“**in one spirit, with one soul**”—for the faith of the Gospel” (27b).

That the Philippians are untterrified in the face of their enemies should be a double token: “**of their perdition, but of your salvation**” (28).

To them is being given the double honor: to believe on Him and to suffer for Him (29). And in this they are following in the footsteps of the great Apostle (30).

Note further: At this point in the Exhortation we reach the transition to Chapter 2. Through the mind, humbly to accept their sufferings, they will also follow in the footsteps of their Lord and Saviour.

Comment

ABSORPTION IN A GREAT CAUSE: THE SECRET OF SUCCESS. With Paul the Gospel was so much greater than himself and so much more absorbing than any or all of his interests.

Herein lay his success, even in prison. “*I do all things for the Gospel,*” we hear him say; and he did. What could Caesar's chains do with such a man? Nothing! He is still succeeding. But the man who is half-hearted in his purpose—how easily stopped, diverted, discouraged, defeated by circumstance. An Edison succeeds, but not without the same secret: he works with genuine relish for it, without the clock, in utter abandonment. God give us more Pauls in His service.

SELF-FORGETFULNESS AND VICTORY. The Life of Victory, like electricity, has two poles, a negative and a positive. The negative pole is Self-Negation. Paul was not thinking of himself; hence he resented no ill-treatment, he felt no ill-will, he reflected no envy or jealousy. Self did not respond. And this, because he had another Center— Christ. Christ filled his life. His climax of concern was that “**Christ shall be magnified.**” Christ galvanized his life. “**Not I, but Christ.**” Christ the Positive Pole. The result: a circuit that nothing can break; a current that nothing can stop. It is Victory in Christ.

“I Do REJOICE, YEA, AND WILL REJOICE.” The reality of the Christian faith has always demonstrated itself best under stress of circumstance. Thousands of Christian prisoners—prisoners only in body—have experienced and expressed the same joy.

The following story of a young Korean Christian, capable of duplication many times over from Korea alone, comes to us through a friend:

After the Russo-Japanese war, when Korea fell into the possession of Japan, military occupation was assumed, with the usual results of fear and discontent on the one hand, tyranny and contempt on the other, and with mutual hatred.

In the course of time the Japanese Governor was assassinated, and his assassination was followed by a reign of terror for the Koreans. Every effort was made to bring to justice all who had to any slight extent shared the guilt, and also all such as could be induced, by fair means or foul, to acknowledge sympathy with the criminals.

From one school in charge of an American missionary, groups of students were arrested in succession and taken to prison where they were examined by torture. Not one of the large number so treated failed his Lord in the slightest degree during the awful sufferings they experienced.

The youngest lad subjected to the test was only twelve years of age. He was suspended by his thumbs, with arms behind his back. His back was previously cut in stripes deep enough to cause great pain, and he was allowed no water or food. This was kept up for a whole day and into the night, while soldiers ate and drank liberally before him as they gambled away the time, stopping occasionally to ask if he was ready to confess his crime. The little fellow was almost insane with thirst and pain and, as it neared midnight, he cried to the Lord, begging that He would not let him fail, that he feared he could not hold out after mid-night. Just a few minutes after the cry of distress he felt strong, tender hands close over his own, his thirst ceased, all suffering left him, and he realized the personal presence of his Lord. Shortly afterward the soldiers took him down and sent him to bed and he was not again molested. His delight in the Lord knew no bounds as he told his experiences to his beloved missionary teacher, and the joy of the Lord continues to be his abiding possession. The missionary was able to count on him at all times as a faithful witness to his risen Lord.

Similarly, prisoners in invalided bodies, behind sightless eyes or deafened ears, with helpless hands or feet, yet with an irrepressible **“joy in the Lord”** overflowing in praise and song. But neighbor to them; with everything to be desired, Christians in health, with friends and full bodily powers; yet with no song, no praise, no joy, but with scarce repressed complaint. How do you account for it?

The only explanation is in the two spheres of life. The one is living in circumstance and even the best does not satisfy. The other is living **“in Christ”** and He never fails to satisfy. Nay under stress **“He giveth more grace,”** and there is added **“joy.”** (Recall again the vital distinction between **“Happiness”** and **“Joy,”** Chapter 1).

“To LIVE IS CHRIST.” The simplest possible defining of the Christian life.

It is not to confess Christ, not to be like Christ, not to live for Christ. Not any function, or attribute, or accompaniment, or activity of the life. Not that, but the life itself—its source, its secret, its essence, its soul, its very heart. The life **“is Christ.”**

He is the Life of Life.

In Creation: **“All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men”** (John 1:3, 4).

In Redemption: **“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”** (John 10:10).

In Salvation: **“God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life”** (I John 5:11, 12).

In Christian Experience: **“Not I [that live], but Christ that liveth in me”** (Galatians 2:20).

In the working out of Salvation, doctrinally known as Sanctification, more popularly as the Life of Fulness, the Higher Life, the Spirit-filled Life, call it which we will, Christ moves more and more to the central place in the life, the actuating, dominating principle, an experience that is ours in actuality in proportion as self is denied control—**“no longer I, but Christ.”** Christ is the Life and the life is **“Christ”**; **“To me to live is—Christ.”**

“To DIE IS GAIN.” In such intimate identification with Him who is Life—not “has,” but “is”—death stands impotent, robbed of reality. We have **“passed out of death into Life”**—out of death into the Deathless One. To die —nothing more than the dissolution of the body—is **“to depart and be with Christ.”**

The Apostle's desire to go Home should be instinctive in every believer's breast; it is so **“far better.”** With us also, the one counter consideration capable of making us content with continued absence from such a Home should be the prospect of further service.

~ end of chapter 1 ~

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