

PAUL'S DILEMMA



In Paul's Letter to the believers at Philippi we read of his "problem" that he had to come to terms with. What I am referring to is the same "problem" that many of us have, even in the hour we are in. Many of us have a sincere desire to "be with Jesus and the Father" in the heavenly realm.

That was exactly the issue that Paul was stating to the believers at Philippi. There he was, traveling with Timothy to the various churches that were already established, as well as starting up new ones in "unchartered territory" for the new but yet growing Body of Christ here on this earth.

We read of Paul's real desire which was to ultimately be with Jesus. This meant that Paul would need to first physically die and leave this earth. As we read this we may not fully comprehend what Paul was telling the Philippians. He was telling them that what he was preaching and teaching them, as well as others in the Body of Christ, was that he **fully believed** in what he was preaching and teaching them. He was 100% cognizant of the fact that to be with Jesus in the heavenly realm was better than anything else on this earth. Except..

Except that the only thing, at least in Paul's thinking, that was more important at the time than being with Jesus, was to tell others and to correctly teach others the truth – the Good News concerning Jesus and the truth concerning God's Word so that they would be able to be with God, the Father and Jesus in eternity. This is vital for each of us to recognize within our own lives. Are we more concerned about what God can do for me here on this earth? Or am I concerned about telling others about salvation and receiving eternal life for themselves in the Kingdom of God. Hmmm...

This shows us what the heart of Paul was really like. He loved God. He loved Jesus. He loved working in the power of the Holy Spirit. However, that love was so strong that he had to "fight" with himself to stay here on this earth to continue the mission of preaching and bringing the Good News of salvation through Jesus to the world. What a focus that Paul had. It would have been easy for him to simply say, "Yes, I just want to go home and be with my God."

However, being the type of man that Paul was within his heart, this meant that he understood his mission. It was given to him by God and it needed to be accomplished before going home and being with His Lord. Paul needed to stay here on this earth to bring the Good News of salvation to as many people as possible so that God would open the door to others to enter into eternal life.

We read in Philippians 1:22 and 23 that Paul "felt" the urgent desire of wanting to be with Jesus. Yet he knew that his call and his time was still "in the now" - to bring the Good News of salvation to whoever the Lord would open the door for him to do so. Wow!!! That is a very far cry from many believers today. Many of us are living for "today" so much. Yes, we believe in our salvation through Jesus but yet we are living for every moment to stay upon this earth and get everything we want – here on this earth.

Now, I am not saying that this is a bad thing. However, what I am saying or rather what I am really asking is, for what purpose do I really want to stay on this earth? Is it because I love this earth and everything on it so much more than the things of God that I don't want to leave this earth? Hmmm...

Please, understand me, I am not saying that living here on this earth is a bad thing nor do I want to suggest anything as such. However, as a believer and as a true born again child of God, I must recognize what my first priority should be every single day of my life while living on this earth. It must always be first, that I am on this earth primarily now as a believer in Jesus and as a child of God, to be an example and a witness for Jesus. My purpose, my reason for living, is to draw others to accept Jesus and enter into the family of God.

Our main focus, as a believer, is to always place God, the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit as the absolute priority of our lives. We are called to worship Him and to follow His ways and His Word. However, the secondary thing that we as believers are called to do is to “go and tell others” and bring them into the fold whether they be Jewish, Gentile, male or female, etc.

Our main purpose is not to build up our churches, although that is important as long as the church is going forth in this same direction – pointing people to Jesus and not simply to the church itself. We are called to make believers of Jesus and then we, just as Paul and the others we read of in the New Testament, are called to now teach those new believers how to be true disciples of Jesus. We are to teach, train and continually show those new disciples how to reach out and bring in others into the Body of Christ, as well.

Paul was absolutely “persuaded” of that fact. He recognized how vital it was for a person to truly come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. That is why the battle was and still is so great. The great battle is continually against the forces of darkness who desire to cast a very large shadow over this. Why? It is simply, because they do not want people to be saved. They want people to go to hell along with them. They know what their end result is going to be. They just choose not to believe or accept it. Their desire is to take as many as they can away from the true and Living God.

They do this by their lies, their false religions but most of all they do it by the false “Christian” doctrines that all of a sudden have risen up in these last days. They deny the facts that an individual must accept, believe and receive Jesus into their own person life and heart. They spew out untruths such as there is no such thing as hell any longer; they teach that the Old Testament and the Gospels are no longer relevant to the world; they tell us that many of the New Testament Letters are false and should no longer be looked at; they also spew out the lie that the Book of Revelation has already taken place and that we really no longer need to review it. They deny the facts of the Book of Revelation which ultimately tells of their demise.

Bottom line is that they declare that every single person is now saved and going to heaven – if they believe and even if they don’t believe in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. They say that God is such a gracious God that He now looks the other way from His Word and chooses to disavow it nor does He choose to keep it any longer. Wow!!! What a bunch of hoey....!!!!

That is not what Paul tells us in this letter to the Philippians. I like what it says in the Holman Christian Standard Bible. It tells us in Philippians 1:27-30 that Paul declares, *“**Just one thing:** Live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, working side by side for the faith [that comes from] the gospel,²⁸ not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your deliverance—and this is from God.²⁹ For it has been given to you on Christ’s behalf not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him,³⁰ having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have.”*

Notice, that he declares it quite plainly as he states, *“**Just one thing...**”* Yes, this is the “one thing” that we all, as true believers, must always remember. He tells us very plainly that we all must live our lives in a manner that is *“worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”* What does Paul mean by that?

It is very simple. We are not to change anything that Jesus taught us. We are not to throw out any of the Old Testament when it tells us how to live as a true child of God. The only things that have been done away with are all the animal sacrifices that would try to make us acceptable to God. However, as we know, their blood was never pure enough nor spotless enough to bring us back into relationship with the Father. It was and is, only through the blood of the spotless Lamb of God, Jesus that the price was paid for all of our sin – fully – yesterday, today and forever.

Paul then writes something that has become so foreign from most of the church today. He refers to “suffering.” Oh my!!! Hey, as believers, we are taught that we no longer “suffer” anything. But yet Paul still declares that “suffering” will be part of the true believer’s life - both at that time and even for all believers today. Yes, true believers will need to endure “suffering” – suffering for the Word’s sake.

That is why many “false teachers” and “false preachers” desire to get rid of many of the Gospels and many of the New Testament letters, as well as the Book of Revelation. It is because those items tell the truth to the true believer that there will be “suffering” for every true believer in Jesus. We do not see “suffering” too much in today’s world, yet - especially in our Western lifestyle... or do we???

I believe we do see it very much so in the Western Lifestyle. We are all into comfort and having things. We are getting settled in on many things. Even though we may not like some things, yet we “let them pass” just so long as we have our things. Take a look at how far the Western lifestyle has fallen from the things of God. We see that marriage has gone “south.” We see that the LGBTQ lifestyle has become so prevalent. We see that our lifestyles are being hurt by the economic situation and the tremendous rise in all types of crime that has risen up. We may not like it but it is still taking place. As all these things, and much more are happening, could it be that God is trying to get our attention... or are we simply just letting it go by because as a believers, we think it is beyond the realm of possibility that I may be suffering.... But maybe we are!!!

Paul states very clearly that the Philippians will be and actually were entering into the same situation as he, himself, was in. They will be seeing much persecution come their way **if** they continue to stand strong in the truths of God. The question to ask ourselves in this hour is, “Will we stand strong in God’s truths or are we all beginning to waiver a little - whether we realize it or not?” Hmmm.....

Paul then continues his encouragement to the Philippians by stating in Philippians 2:1-4 (KJV), *“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, ² Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. ³ Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves. ⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”*

Paul encourages the Philippians as well as each one of us, today. He states that in Jesus, in Christ our Lord, we have encouragement, consolation, and fellowship with God through His Holy Spirit. Paul encourages us as he continues to tell the true believers to “focus in on one goal.” What is that one goal? It is that we all should look out for each other. We are not to look at our own interests and our own things, but rather, and this is the real life of a true child of God - to look after the needs, concerns and interests of all the other believers, first – not our own needs, concerns and interests.

If we notice, we will see that this is the common thread throughout the New Testament. As a true believer in Jesus, it means that we believe and accept Jesus as our own, personal Lord and Savior. However, right after we have affirmed that within our life, we are called by God and told by every writer in the New Testament to then look after and take care of the needs of others before taking care of our own needs.

What happened? It seems as though that has been taken out of the scriptures. It has become all about - me, myself and I. It has become all about, not what God has done for me, but rather it has become all about what God will give to me. It has become all about me. It really should be all about Him. Yes, He cares for every one of my needs. However, that is not the main reason why I love and serve Him. I love Him because He has given me new life through a born again spirit and now I express that love in the way that He desires me to express it – by loving and serving Him. I truly do that by loving and serving others. That is the whole “ball of wax.” That is what it is all about.

That is what Jesus taught but somehow it has gotten all messed up. As I have written on numerous occasions, when we become a child of God, our lives are no longer a two sided coin – loving God on one side and then loving others on the other side. No, through Jesus we become a “one-sided child of God.” We love God by serving others and when we serve others we are actually loving God. That should be the life of a true child of God. That was what Paul was stating to the believers at Philippi.

We know that Paul then gives the true and best example of all of this by expressing the facts of Jesus coming to this earth as the Son of God and then dying on that cross for each and every one of us. Paul tells us that this is the mind that every believer must have. It is the mind that Jesus has. We must all have this same mind, the same way that Jesus thought, if we are a true child of God.

Paul writes in Philippians 2:6-11 (KJV) concerning Jesus, *“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: ⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: ⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: ¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; ¹¹ And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

It basically tells us that even though Jesus was God, He chose to take the role of a **servant** so that people could be saved. In doing this we see that Jesus was ultimately, *“highly exalted.”* He was given *“a name which is above every other name.”* Because of what Jesus did for all of God’s beloved creation, He was given **the** place above everyone and everything else – every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is the Messiah; the Lord of all. The purpose for all of this being that God, the Father, would ultimately be glorified by His beloved creation – all of us.

We will all soon see that day coming when every tongue that ever was and will be, whether they believe in Jesus or not, will ultimately declare, to the glory of God, the Father, that Jesus is the absolute, supreme and final authority of all – He is Lord!!! That is what each of our lives as His disciples should be expressing. We must be expressing the life that Jesus taught us to live. We must all, as well as myself, must truly love the Lord our God with all of our heart, our soul, our mind – with all that is within me!!!

I understand Paul’s dilemma. Oh, how he wanted to be with Jesus in the heavenly realm. Yet, there was a job that he needed to do on this earth unto the Lord. We are in the same situation. Yes, oh how we want to be with the Father, with Jesus and with the Holy Spirit, yet we all have a function to do as we live and walk on this earth. We all must tell others of salvation through Jesus. However, never forget that one day...we will be with Him forever and ever and ever. I can’t wait!!!