

Christ Magnified in My Body 1

~Other Speakers M-R: Leonard Ravenhill:

Phillipians 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..."

I used to think that in the second letter to the Corinthians, chapter 5, Paul gives a summary of his theology. He believes that

- If we are absent from the body, we are present with the Lord.
- Knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men.
- We must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ.

Dear Keith Green said one day in my office, as we were talking about the roads,
 "All roads lead to the judgment seat." It's true. They do. Whether we are
 slaves or free men,
 intellectuals or ignoramuses,
 black or white,
 rich or poor:
 "All roads lead to the judgment seat." Without exception.

Then verse 14 expresses what I always considered to be the thing that really motivated him. He
 out-preached everybody
 out-suffered everybody
 out-prayed everybody.

I thought that 14th verse, "For the love of Christ constraineth me," was the motivation, with the obligation to present Christ in all his majesty and glory.

Now I've come to this conclusion reading recently our verse in Phillipians, that the motivation of the apostle in his zigzag course -- in prison, out of prison, in weariness, in fastings, in painfulness, in tribulations, in distress, in perils of his countrymen, in perils of the deep, in perils of robbers -- the one thing that motivated him is here in this 20th verse:

"...as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body
 (or as some put it by my body), whether it be by life, or by death."

The thing that gripped me as I read it this week, Christ may be magnified,
 - not in my ministry
 - not in my miracles
 - not in my superlove

but, he says, that Christ might be magnified IN MY BODY.

If you turn over to chapter 4 verse 6, this explains his life, I think. He says,

Be careful for nothing.
 Be prayerful in everything
 Be thankful in anything.

That covers a lot of territory, doesn't it? The King James version, says "Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." I believe that's the territory in which he lived, and moved, and had his being.

Now, this epistle is very beautiful. You know why? Because it is a love letter.

Some of you ladies remember the first one you got. A fellow in our church fell in love with my sister. He wrote a letter to her. Boy! Shakespeare couldn't have done better! She had eyes like stars... her cheeks were rosy...I never knew it. I lived with her for twenty years and never noticed one of those things he said she had! Because beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

This is a lovely epistle. For one thing, there is no mention of sin in this epistle. I think Paul is actually saying here that in the greatest suffering you can have the greatest joy. (We like the bonuses, but we're not too anxious to have the burdens, are we?) If you read the epistle carefully, you'll find that fourteen times he mentions "joy," and he was in a stinking hole of a prison that we wouldn't even put a dog in these days! No bed. No creature comforts. The rottenest food. Just a hell-hole. Yet here he is sending a letter of greeting and cheer to other people who should be writing letters to him. So with all the greatness and all the pressure, he says it is

possible to have this boundless joy. Again, he does not mention sin. He mentions flesh once, and then dismisses it. He is showing us that there is a grace of God far more exceedingly abundant than all that we can either ask or think.

Some of you know that great hymn, "The sands of time are sinking...." Mrs. Cousins extracted phrases out of the wonderful diary of the great old Scottish saint, Samuel Rutherford and put that marvelous, marvelous hymn together. I think it's maybe the greatest hymn ever written. He said "I have to go into the king's cellar to find the king's wine."

I remember old houses not far from where we lived. We got in one, one day.

The oldest son was a friend of mine. He said, "Have you ever been in our huge underground cellar?" I said, "No." We went in. There were all the old wine racks.

We searched dozens. They were all empty! But he said, "Look at the old wines they used to keep." Labels from Portugal, Spain, and here and there, champagne from France and all the rest of it. But they're not stored upstairs in the refrigerator.

They're stored in dungeons. In the dark places.

And we would like God to serve up, as it were, the wine of heaven just like we are, living on the level, without any interruption of trial or tribulation or testing. But that's not the way that God works.

You know Romans 12. I'm thinking of places where Paul talks about his body. He doesn't talk about yielding your mind merely. In Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice." Not your brain. Not your emotion. Not your spirit. But if I said to somebody, "Look. Here's my watch." - Well, this one is a fairly modern one. I don't have to wind it up. But the old ones had "works" in them, you know. They were marvelous old things. They used to call them "stem-winders." They're collectors items now. - If I gave a man my watch, I gave him the works, the hands, the face. I gave him everything.

Well, if I present my body a living sacrifice, surely I'm presenting everything that I have. My spirit, my soul, my body. For which Paul prays in 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." So I give my body in its entirety to God.

A girl, in England, years ago wrote a beautiful hymn:

All for Jesus!, all for Jesus!
All my being's ransomed powers;
All my thoughts and words and doings,
All my days and all my hours...

She goes on to say,

Let my hands perform his bidding;
Let my feet run in His ways;
Let my eyes see Jesus only;
Let my lips speak forth His praise.

Then she says, so beautifully,
Since my eyes were fixed of Jesus
I've lost sight of all beside.

Vision is so vital in the Christian life. On that Damascus Road... I don't believe the apostle Paul ever recovered from that experience of being blinded. Physically he did. His eye were opened, sure enough. But I believe he was blinded to all the treasures of this world, as this girl says:

Since my eyes were fixed of Jesus,
I've lost sight of all beside;
So enchained my spirit's vision,
Gazing on the crucified.

Or if you want it in the words of Isaac Watts, after you've seen Him, "my richest gain I count but loss." As I've said so often, we use that phrase, one day after you've seen Jesus, "The things of earth will grow strangely dim." I like to turn that around and say, when we get to heaven and look back, "The things of earth will look strangely grim."

We live and we spend our time gathering sawdust. Everything we spend our lives to get is perishable, outside of the spiritual. Paul says we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice. So the body can be a living sacrifice. In

the same verse he said it can be "holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Now in its normal condition it cannot be that. The human body is corruptible. The flesh in us is corruptible. But once He takes us in His infinite mercy, and Romans 5 is fulfilled,

We receive the grace of God.

We receive the peace of God.

We begin to walk with God.

Then we can present that body, which he will sanctify, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is only our reasonable service.

Romans 8 is a fantastic chapter. Verses 1 and 2 say,

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

Come down to verse 6.

"To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Now, how can you harmonize death and life?

A man called me yesterday. He talked, I'm sure, forty or fifty minutes from California. Oh he was in despair about the carnality mastering his life. He said, "Well, I'm a Christian. I'm sanctified." "You are?" I asked. He said, "Yeah, but something carnal dominates me."

Well, that's ridiculous. How can you be carnally dominated if you're spiritual? This scripture is very clear. To be carnally minded is death. I think preachers are very often the devil's advocates. They defend sin better than an atheist. They tell you, "You can't get rid of sin on this side of eternity. It has to have dominion over you." The scripture says it doesn't!

Oh, this man had just one sin of the flesh that mastered him. He could not, in any shape or form, get the victory over it. I said, "Well, get it nailed to the cross.

That's the answer."

Again, Romans 6, "we are buried with him by baptism..." As I use the illustration so often, if a man is standing here in the water, and I bury him under the water, he's cut off from the world above.

He can't see the world above.

He can't breathe the air above.

He can't talk with the world above.

He is cut off!

We saw some people baptized last week. I thought of them, as they went through the water. Symbolically, they are saying, "Look. This is my grave. I'm being buried to the world above," to it's "idle pomp and fading joys," as one hymn writer says.

Somehow preachers love to fall back on Romans 7, don't they?

I heard an amazing Bible teacher. He gave a great message on holiness to about 400 preachers. But when he had taken us into the heavenlies, he said, "Now, don't think I'm preaching a second work of grace, or that you can be really holy in this life, because even the apostle finished up in Romans 7..." He DID NOT FINISH UP in Romans 7! There happens to be a Romans 8! In the Greek there is no difference, there is no chapter division; we have an artificial division. Paul says there is no answer in the law. "Oh, wretched man that I am." Sure he said that. "Who shall deliver me from this...death?" Well, if he stopped there, we would be in trouble. He says, "I thank God through Jesus Christ, my Lord." That's why he starts Romans 8:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free..."

I hate planes. As I say facetiously, "Flying is for the birds." Yet, every time that monster takes off, I try to estimate,... there are three hundred passengers in that plane, all the baggage, the many tons of gasoline...off it goes with a roar! Soon you see the land dropping away as you go up. The thrust that's there is greater than the law of gravity. Well, then, what about the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus?

Oh, I love resurrection hymns. "Up from the grave he arose!" I like that! As I said the other day when we sang it: Sing it with a sneer! "Death cannot keep its prey." "Sin shall not have dominion over us." "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free..."

Look at verse 8. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." "Well, there you are," some will say. "There's your answer." No, the answer is in the next verse: "But you are not in the flesh." He's talking about this flesh in one place, and he's talking about the "fleshy nature" in the other. Verse 9: "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you." Look at verse 10: "...if Christ be in you." And verse 11: "...if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you." What else do you want?

You have the spirit of God in you.

You have the spirit of life in you.

You have the spirit of the Son in you.

You have the spirit of the Spirit in you.

How can there be room for carnality?

"Knowing this," Paul says, "that our old life, our old man was crucified with him."

"Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

In Romans 6:11, he says "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." In the same verse, he says to reckon your body to be dead indeed unto sin, alive unto God in Christ Jesus. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death," that Christ may be magnified through my body. (Rom. 8:2)

Do you remember the psalmist? He says, "upon an instrument of ten strings will I praise thee." What kind of a thing is that? A guitar? A harp? You say, "I don't have an instrument of ten strings." Well, suppose you look at it this way: You've got two feet, two hands, two eyes, two ears, one tongue, and one heart. Ten strings! That's why the girl says in that hymn,

Let my hands perform his bidding;

Let my feet run in his way;

Let my eyes see Jesus only;

Let my lips speak forth his praise.

Or, an American hymn, if you like.

Take my life...

Take my hands and let them move,

At the impulse of thy love.

Take my feet and let them be,

Swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour,

At thy feet its treasures store.

Take my will (that's the last area that we yield)... Take my will and make it thine...

Paul isn't even saying that Christ may be magnified by my epistles. Oh, I think he wrote the greatest things that any human being was ever allowed to write. His magnificent epistle to the Romans, the Ephesians, the Colossians etc. If you read carefully through the first chapter of Phillipians,, you'd see the position in life of the Christian. If you read the second chapter, you get the pattern of Christ. In the third chapter, you get the energy that carries the Christian through this world. In Chapter four, the Christian's superiority to our circumstances. In other words, this epistle is the whole character of the Christian life. Paul shows how to walk and work in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, of course, is the fire leader, the best example of it.

I think that Paul was the greatest genius the world ever saw.

A colossal intellect.

A will that never tired.

A faith that never flinched.

A love that never broke down.
A courage that nobody could dominate.
He stands cheerfully before kings.
He is as happy in jail writing the epistle of love as he is in any circumstance of life.

So he shows us that man, whatever amount of genius he has, can be complete in God without even being involved in the world outside the prison walls, in its material concept, or its business concept. He is totally God's man.

I think it was Spinoza who talked about a "God-intoxicated man." That God-intoxicated man is the apostle Paul, in my judgment. In perils of the deep, he doesn't shake. Everybody else on the ship is terrified. He stands by. The captain sends for him and Paul says, "Wasn't that some storm last night?"

I can imagine the captain answering,

"I've been at sea for fifty years and never gone through a night like that. I guess you're like the rest of us, cringing, holding onto your bed, terrified..."

"No," Paul said, "I had a great night. I had a great time of fellowship."

"Fellowship? Is there another Christian on board?"

"Well, there was last night."

"What's he called?"

Paul said, "An angel from heaven."

"A what?"

He said, "Last night I had an angel visitor in my cabin. Boy, did we have a time talking about the glory and majesty of God!"

I think that experience he had is typical of the end of the age. Paul got on board that ship as a prisoner and he ended as the pilot. Everybody got the jitters. Everybody was terrified. Everybody was vomiting and yelling and screaming, and there Paul is: glorifying God!

Do you see what strange people Christians are? You know he was so amazing that when they skinned his back until it was raw, he said, "None of these things hurt me." Did he? No he didn't. You know, people say that if you get saved and filled with the spirit, you'll never be hurt, you'll never have any troubles... Well I must be backslidden, because I get a lot of them! Paul did not say none of these things hurt me, he said none of these things move me.

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