

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

#03-09150

To Be Living Is Christ

August 20, 2009

I find myself attracted to Paul's epistles because he had an all-consuming passion and desire for Christ. He saw himself *in* Christ, and he saw Christ *in* him. Through his epistles, Paul tells us that he had no life apart from Christ, the One who appeared to him on the road to Damascus and called him to be an apostle to the nations.

I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me.... (Galatians 2:20 DNT)

These four words "Christ lives in me" pretty much sum up Paul's life.

Spiritually speaking, apart from Christ, Paul was a dead man. At the cross of Calvary, he died with Christ, and for this reason, Paul declared that he no longer lived. He was *in* Christ when He died and when He rose from the grave. How else can a dead man live unless he is given a new life? Consequently, the only way that he had life was by Christ living *in* him. It had to be His life. No longer *I live, but Christ lives in me!*

It is interesting that we find no record of Paul ever asking Jesus to come into his heart and take up residence, as so many today are told to ask Jesus to do. When Jesus broke into his life, by His spirit He took up residence in Paul, and so it is for all of us.

By extension, when we first believed, the same thing occurred in our life, not because we asked Him to come into our life but because it is the only way we are saved (1 Corinthians 15:2), are being saved (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2 Corinthians 2:15), and will be saved (1 Thessalonians 5:9). Of course, there is another side to this truth of *Christ lives in me*, and that is, the life we live once we are given the faith to believe is a life not lived for our self but for Christ. It is no longer to be an *I*-centered life (everything focused on self) but a *Christ*-centered and Christ all-encompassing life. This does not mean that there is no longer an *I* in our life; it just means that our *I* is refocused on the Lord rather than on self. After all, Paul said: **The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God** (Galatians 2:20).

Now, in his very personal and revealing letter to the Philippians, Paul expressed more of his heart on the matter of Christ in him as he declared: **"For to me to be living is Christ."**

(19) For I am aware that, for me, this will be eventuating in salvation through your petition and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ, (20) in accord with my premonition and expectation, that in nothing shall I be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. (21) For to me to be living is Christ, and to be dying, gain. (22) Now if it is to be living in flesh, this to me means fruit from work, and what I shall be preferring I am not making known. (23) (Yet I am being pressed out of the two, having a yearning for the solution and to be together with Christ, for it, rather, is much better.) (24) Yet to be staying in the flesh is more necessary because of you. (Philippians 1:19-24 CV)

Paul wrote to the Galatians that Christ lived in him, and he elaborated on this truth as he wrote to the Philippians that life itself is Christ, to be living is Christ. It was more than Christ in him; it was Christ in him giving him life. To add to this, Paul wrote to the Colossians: **Christ, who is our life** (Colossians 3:4). Further, he greeted his beloved Timothy with the encouragement of **Christ Jesus, our hope and the promise of life in Christ Jesus** (1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1).

Paul was so caught by Christ that his whole life was devoted to Him. His sole purpose was that Christ would be magnified in his body, whether through life or through death. The only life worth living is a life *for* Christ and a life *in* Christ. But it is even more than this, for life itself *is* Christ. Do you see the difference? Life to Paul was Christ; there was no other life. Paul knew the Resurrection and the Life!

Paul's passion for Christ was so intense that, no matter what he did, he desired gain for his Master. If he lived, it would be gain to Christ, and if he died for the cause of Christ, it would be gain to Christ.

Many people misread Paul's heart in these words. They think that his gain was for himself in that if he died a martyr he would go to be with the Lord at that very moment. I have written much on this subject in an attempt to correct what I believe to be the unbiblical doctrine that there is **life in death**; a doctrine that marginalizes the resurrection, something that Paul never did but rather defended (1 Corinthians 15). Paul looked forward to the day of Christ (Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16; 2 Timothy 4:8), **so that what is mortal will be swallowed up in life** (2 Corinthians 5:4), and this takes place at the resurrection when **this mortal must put on immortality** (1 Corinthians 15:53).

Consequently, Paul could not have meant that to die was gain for him. In his death, Paul desired that Christ would get the gain. Another way of stating this is that Christ alone would get all the glory. Death to Paul was for the glory of God and not for some benefit to himself. To believe that Paul sought gain for himself is totally out of character for this beloved apostle, and all who see him seeking gain for himself miss Paul's heart. I realize that some would argue that desiring to be with the Lord was Paul's heart as well. This is true, but Paul never taught that Christians bypass the resurrection to be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 proves the point. **So we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words** (1 Thessalonians 4:17b-18). To what did the comforting words refer? To those who are asleep in Jesus rising from among the dead in resurrection!

Thus, the gain was to Christ alone. Paul was seeking gain for Christ in his life or in his death. He was hard-pressed to choose between the two options. Either way was gain for Christ. However, there was something very much better than living or dying for Christ and His ecclesia.

(Yet I am being pressed out of the two, having a yearning for the solution and to be together with Christ, for it, rather, is much better.) (Philippians 1:23 CV)

Paul desired to be with the Lord in glory. This was very much better than either of the options of living or dying. Paul was not stating that *in* death he would be with Christ. Again, he was reinforcing what he had written to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians regarding the resurrection from among the dead. The *out*-resurrection was the very much better way.

See issue #03-09148, August 10, 2009, *Exanastasis, The Out-Resurrection*.

Paul stated his very much better way later in this same epistle: **If somehow I should be attaining to the [out] resurrection that is out from among the dead** (Philippians 3:11 CV [WAET]). There is no indication in Paul's epistles that he saw any other way into the presence of the Lord. Christ's way out of death was through resurrection, and so it must be for His body as well. It is the much better way!

Until that glorious day, **to be living is Christ** should be the reality for every blood-bought saint of God. We have no life apart from Christ. Apart from Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:5). But thank God; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). Every provision has been made for us to reach the goal of the upward call of God because we are in Christ and He is in us—to be living is Christ.

Is Christ Jesus your passion, the very love of your life? The secret of the Christian life is already in you—Christ in you! He loves you. We need to have our eyes continually opened and, by faith, let Christ live! This goes along with what I wrote in issue #03-09149, August 19, 2009, *A Life Lived, Not Taught*.

I want to leave you with a word the Lord spoke to my heart many years ago. He said: **“Righteousness is My standard! Holiness is My character! Love is My way! Glory is My end!”**

May you be encouraged that this is the life that lives in you and is being formed in you. The **I AM** is in you; a life to be lived! This life will reach God's end, which is His new beginning when all is new.