

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN PHILIPPIANS

"TO KNOW HIM AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION.."
PHILIPPIANS 3:10



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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN PHILIPPIANS

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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN PHILIPPIANS

Session 1

A Life in the Furtherance of the Gospel, Shining as Luminaries and Holding Forth the Word of Life

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:5, 7, 12, 27; 2:15-16

I. The whole book of Philippians is a definition of the gospel, which is the preaching of God's economy—Phil. 1:5, 7, 12, 15-18, 27; 2:22; 4:3, 15:

- A. The gospel of God's economy is not simply to have a group of people who are forgiven of their sins, justified, washed by the blood of Christ, and regenerated—it includes every aspect of the experience of Christ covered in this book.
- B. We are blessed and privileged to participate in the fellowship, furtherance, defense, confirmation, advancement, and faith of the gospel, which includes Christ as the One lived out and magnified through us (1:19-21), Christ as our pattern (2:5-11), Christ as the goal (3:8-14), and Christ as our inward strength (4:11-13).

II. The Christ-experiencing and Christ-enjoying life is a life in the furtherance of the gospel, a gospel-preaching life that is not individualistic but corporate—1:5, 7, 27; 4:13:

- A. This kind of fellowship, which kept the believers from being individualistic and diversely minded, implies that they were one with the apostle Paul and with one another; this gave them the ground for their experience and enjoyment of Christ, which is the main point of this book—4:10.
- B. The more fellowship we have in the furtherance of the gospel, the more Christ we experience and enjoy; this kills our self, ambition, preference, and choice—1:7, 27.
- C. The Philippian believers participated with the Apostle Paul in the fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel by their financial contributions to the apostle, which became a sweet-smelling savor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God—4:10, 15-20; Heb. 13:16; 3 John 8; cf. 2 Cor. 9:7; Acts 2:44-47.
- D. Paul preached and suffered for the defense and confirmation of the gospel, because he cared solely for the interests and accomplishment of God's economy on the earth—1:7, 12-18:
 - 1. On the negative side, we must defend the gospel against the perversion and distortion of today's religion—Rev. 2:9, 24; 3:20.
 - 2. On the positive side, the confirmation of the gospel is for the announcing of the revelations of the two mysteries in the Epistles—Christ as the mystery of God and the church as mystery of Christ—Col. 1:26-28; 2:2, 4:3; Eph. 3:4, 9; 5:32.
- E. Paul's sufferings resulted in the advancement of the gospel as a pioneer cuts the way for an army to march forward—Phil. 1:12:
 - 1. Today we are marching on the way cut by Paul in his sufferings for the gospel so that the church may advance—1:27, 30.
 - 2. Our suffering for the gospel today positions us to share and enjoy the processed Triune God as grace and encourages, strengthens, and stirs up the saints to speak the word of God with boldness—1:7, 29, 14.

III. We need to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ by standing firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel—v. 27:

- A. We need not only to stand firm in one spirit in order to experience Christ but also to strive together with one soul along with the faith of the gospel.
- B. After being regenerated in our spirit, we must be transformed in our soul so that we can be like-souled (lit. co-souled) with one another, striving and fighting together with the faculties of our soul exercised as weapons in warfare to fight for God's interests on the earth—2:2, 20-21; 3:14-15; 4:2-3; cf. Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:4-5.

IV. In the midst of this dark and corrupt world which is usurped by Satan, our function is to shine as luminaries, holding forth the word of life—Phil. 2:15-16; 1 John 5:19; 2:15-17:

- A. The Greek word for luminaries in Philippians 2:15 refers to heavenly bodies that reflect the light of the sun:
 - 1. As such luminaries, the believers shine in the world; they do not possess any light in themselves but have a heavenly ability to reflect the light of Christ—James 1:17.
 - 2. Christ is the sun, with the church as the moon and the believers as the planets to reflect Him by holding forth the word of life—S. S. 6:10.
- B. To hold forth the word of life is to apply it, to present it, and to offer it to the world by living out Christ—Acts 5:20 and footnote 2.
- C. The way to live and magnify Christ by shining as luminaries is to be saturated with His word of life:
 - 1. The word of life is different from the doctrine of dead letters; it is the living breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16), the Spirit who gives life (John 6:63).
 - 2. When we are right in our spirit and pure in our heart and then come to the Word with our whole being open to the Lord, we will have the sense that we are entering into a sphere of light.
 - 3. We need to eat, drink, and breathe the word in the Bible by pray-reading and singing it:
 - a. According to the entire revelation in the Holy Bible, God's words are good for us to eat, and we need to eat them—Jer. 15:16; Psa. 119:103; Matt. 4:4; Heb. 5:12-14; 6:5; 1 Pet. 2:2-3.
 - b. The Scripture, the word of God, is the breathing out of God—2 Tim. 3:16.
 - c. The way to receive the Word is by means of all prayer and petition—Eph. 6:17.
 - d. The way to let the Lord's word dwell in us richly is by teaching, admonishing, and singing—Col. 3:16.
 - e. As we pray-read a portion of the Word, we will sense that something inwardly is moving, operating in us to comfort, strengthen, satisfy, and refresh us.

Session 1

A Life in the Furtherance of the Gospel, Shining as Luminaries and Holding Forth the Word of Life

KEY VERSES

Phil. 1:5a	[Y]our fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now.
v. 13	So that my bonds have become manifest as being in Christ among the whole Praetorian guard and to all the rest.
vv. 19-21a	19 For I know that for me this will turn out to salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I will be put to shame, but with all boldness, as always, even now Christ will be magnified in my body, whether through life or through death. 21a For to me, to live is Christ.

MINISTRY EXCERPTS

THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL BEING THE FACTOR FOR LIVING CHRIST

In [Philippians] chapter one Christ is our life and living. To take Christ as our life within and our living without is to live Christ (v. 21a). This chapter also reveals that the reason we live Christ, taking Christ as our life and our living, is for the furtherance of the gospel (vv. 5, 12). The experience of Christ as our life and living comes out of the furtherance of the gospel. The more we have fellowship in the gospel, in coordination with the apostle, the more we live Christ. The factor for living Christ is the furtherance of the gospel which is carried out in a corporate way.

Some have separated the preaching of the gospel from the experience of Christ. This is a mistaken concept. Our experience of Christ, our living of Christ, must have the factor of the furtherance of the gospel. Without such a factor, our words about living Christ are vain. Paul and the Philippians lived Christ, taking Christ as their life within and their living without, because they all were in the corporate fellowship of the gospel. The apostle was burdened for the furtherance of the gospel, and the Philippians were in coordination with him. Paul and the Philippians were happy in the furtherance of the gospel, and they all enjoyed Christ as their life within and their living without. Philippians 1 reveals not only the factor but also the result. The factor is the furtherance of the gospel with the apostle, and the result is the enjoyment of Christ, the experience of Christ, as both our life within and our living without. When you go out in the gospel, you enjoy Christ not in a doctrinal way but in a very experiential way.

Our enjoyment of Christ must have a factor, and it must also have an issue. The furtherance of the gospel is the factor of our enjoyment of Christ. Furthermore, the more we enjoy Christ, the more we participate in the furtherance of the gospel. Thus, the furtherance of the gospel is also the issue of our enjoyment of Christ.

I dare not compare myself with the Apostle Paul, but in my experience, I have had the same kind of feeling that he expressed in Philippians 1:21-24. As an elderly person, I have had a lot of experiences on this earth. I have lost my taste for anything on this earth except Christ. As a young person it is easy to be attracted to other things. But, as an

elderly man, without the Lord Jesus, I would lose interest in living. This is because there is nothing good on this earth. The only interest, taste, and enjoyment I have as I remain on this earth is to help sinners receive Christ, to help all of you enjoy Christ more, and to help the church be built up organically as the living Body of Christ. This is what I really enjoy.

I have been quite busy labouring even until late at night. Yet, I have had a good and sound sleep every night. Occasionally, the enemy Satan raises up attacks from different directions, but the Lord has taught me the lesson of not being touched or stirred up regardless of what happens. I can testify that nothing on this earth can frustrate someone who enjoys Christ. Paul's experience was like this. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Philippians from a prison in Rome while he was under the threat of martyrdom. He knew that he might be killed, but he was not bothered or upset; rather, he expected to magnify Christ in his body through life or through death. He said this while his body was in bonds. His concern was not for his bonds but for how the enjoyment of Christ among the Philippians could be increased...Their experience of Christ made him very happy. (*The Experience and Growth in Life*, pp. 65-67)

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN PHILIPPIANS

Session 2

A Life of Constant Salvation with Forbearance and without Anxiety

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:12-16; 4:1-9

- I. In Philippians 1 and 2, the Apostle Paul uses the word salvation to denote a subjective salvation which is experienced not once for all, but moment by moment—Phil. 1:19; 2:12:**
 - A. These two chapters show us, on the one hand, a salvation that is for a particular person in a particular situation and, on the other hand, a salvation that is for all believers in the common situations of their daily life—1:12-21; 2:12-16; 4:1-8.
 - B. God's salvation in Christ is not only eternal, saving us from God's judgment and eternal perdition, but a practical salvation that can be applied to our daily situations hour by hour—1:13.
- II. I know that for me this will turn out to salvation denotes the particular salvation Paul experienced during his imprisonment in Rome—Phil. 1:19:**
 - A. Salvation did not mean Paul expected to be released from prison, but that in the particular situation of his imprisonment he would not be put to shame by not magnifying Christ—2:17.
 - B. No matter how insulting and how difficult Paul's situation was, he did not weep or complain but instead rejoiced in the Lord, sang hymns of praise to Him, and testified concerning Him to others, which was actually to live Christ—4:4, 21-22; Acts 16:23-25.
 - C. Our family life and particular situations can be compared to a "prison," with the persons we live with and contact as our "jailers," along with the church life with its many saints of different nationalities, dispositions, and personalities—Eph. 3:1; 4:1; cf. Col. 4:18b.
 - D. In order to stay in the church life in the midst of our particular situations, we need to experience a present and practical salvation—1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 3:10-11; cf. 2 Tim. 1:17; 4:10-16.
- III. Work out your own salvation denotes a constant salvation for us to be saved from the ordinary things of our daily living, including murmurings, reasonings, blame, guile, blemishes, crookedness, perverseness, and darkness—Phil. 2:12-15:**
 - A. The daily situation of fallen man includes all these negative things:
 1. Do all things without murmurings and reasonings indicates that our natural life is a life of murmurings from our emotion and reasonings from our mind that result from our disobedience to God and which frustrate us from experiencing and enjoying Christ—v. 14.
 2. That you may be blameless and guileless children of God without blemish indicates that we are not blameless in our outward behavior, not guileless in our inward character, and full of blemishes, spots, and wrinkles that come from our natural life and old man—v. 15; Eph. 5:27; cf. S. S. 4:7a.

3. Crooked indicates that we are dishonest and not straightforward—Phil. 2:15b.
 4. Perverted indicates that we are “warped” and “twisted” in the way we think and consider others and ourselves—v. 15; cf. 2:3-4.
- B. Day by day we need a constant and practical salvation that can be applied to our daily situations to save us from anything that is not Christ so that we are brought into a condition where spontaneously we live Christ—1:19-21; Gal. 2:20.

IV. “Let your forbearance be known to all men. The Lord is near”—Phil. 4:5:

- A. Forbearance is sweet reasonableness, considerateness, and consideration in dealing with others and means that we are easily satisfied with less than our due—it is an all-inclusive Christian virtue that includes: love, patience, kindness, humility, compassion, considerateness, and submissiveness.
- B. A forbearing person is one who always fits in, whose behavior is always suitable, who has the ability to supply others with what they need, and who has the full knowledge of what to say to them and when to say it—Isa. 50:4-5; 2 Cor. 6:1a; 10:1; Col. 1:28; cf. Isa. 11:2.
- C. As an all-inclusive virtue, forbearance is Christ Himself; since Christ is forbearance, to live Christ is forbearance—Phil. 1:21a:
 1. Only the Lord Jesus lived a life full of forbearance, and only Christ can be our perfect forbearance today—Gal. 2:20.
 2. To let our forbearance be known to all men is to let the Christ whom we live and magnify and whom we take as our pattern and pursue as our goal, be known to all men, expressing Christ as the totality of all of our human virtues—Acts 27:21; 28:6, 9.

V. “In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving”—Phil. 4:6a:

- A. Anxiety, coming from Satan, is the sum total of human life and disturbs the believers’ life of living Christ; forbearance, coming from God, is the sum total of a life that lives Christ; the two are opposites—Matt. 6:25-34; 1 Pet. 5:7.
- B. The words in everything refer to the many different things which happen to us day by day—Matt. 10:29-30; Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Cor. 4:15-18.
- C. As we pray to worship and fellowship with God, petition for our particular needs, and give thanks to the Lord, we will enjoy the peace of God, which is actually God Himself as peace infused into us, to patrol our hearts and thoughts in Christ and to keep us calm and tranquil as the counterpoise to troubles and the antidote to anxiety—Matt. 11:28; Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 3:15.

VI. “Finally, brothers, what things are true...dignified...righteous...pure...lovely...well spoken of”—Phil. 4:8a:

- A. These virtues are the expressions of God’s attributes lived out from within the pursuers of Christ and are the six governing aspects of a life that lives Christ.
- B. To be a proper human being is to express God through His divine attributes in our human virtues, to have a human life filled with Christ as the reality of the attributes of God—1 Tim. 2:2, 10; 3:15-16.

Session 2

A Life of Constant Salvation with Forbearance and without Anxiety

KEY VERSES

- Phil. 4:5-7** **5** Let your forbearance be known to all men. The Lord is near. **6** In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses every man's understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.
- v. 9** The things which you have also learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace will be with you.

MINISTRY EXCERPTS

WITHOUT ANXIETY

In verse 6 Paul goes on to say, "In nothing be anxious." Often when we hear bad news, we worry and fall into anxiety. Anxiety undermines the living of Christ. Instead of being anxious, in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving we should make our requests known to God. Then the peace of God will guard our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus (v. 7). The peace of God saves us from worry and anxiety. Paul's word here proves that our interpretation of these verses according to our experience is correct. Being free from anxiety is for the purpose of keeping us calm and tranquil.

In verse 6 Paul charges us "in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." The words *in everything* refer to the many different things which happen to us day by day. Under the Lord's blessing, many positive things happen, and we hear good news. However, we also experience negative things and hear bad news. Nevertheless, in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, we should make our requests known to God. Prayer is general with the essence of worship and fellowship; petition is special for particular needs. Notice that Paul says "with thanksgiving," not "and thanksgiving." This indicates that both our prayer and petition should be accompanied by thanksgiving to the Lord.

It may seem easy to understand Paul's word, "Let your requests be made known to God." But we should not take this word for granted, assuming that we understand it. I have spent considerable time studying the phrase *to God*. It may also be rendered "before God" or "in the presence of God." The Greek preposition is *pros*, often translated "with" (John 1:1; Mark 9:19; 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Cor. 16:6; 1 John 1:2). It denotes motion towards, in the sense of a living union and communion, implying fellowship. Hence, the force of *to God* here is in fellowship with God. We should let our requests be made known to God in such a fellowship, in such a union and communion. This requires that we pray to contact God.

In our prayer to God there must be the essence of worship and fellowship, and also petitions for particular needs. Even if we do not have specific needs, we still need a time of prayer day by day to worship the Lord and have fellowship with Him. As we worship the Lord and have fellowship with Him in prayer, we enjoy communion with Him and practice the organic union with Him. (*Life-Study of Philippians*, pp. 229-230)

You can talk with [the Lord] and confer with Him in everything. The Lord's Word says, "In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let

your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). Hence, if you have some problem, you just need to tell Him. He is right within you, and He is with you face to face. The Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—is in us not to trouble us but to be our Paraclete, Comforter, and Supporter. I always pray, “O Lord, now I am going to take a walk. Support me, sustain me, and strengthen me.” This is to drink the Lord. In this way I have no anxiety. When anxiety comes, you should say, “O Lord, this anxiety is Yours, not mine; I give it to You because You bear it for me.” Thus, you receive the Lord's element into you, and metabolism will work constantly in you. Consequently, what is expressed through you outwardly is Christ. This is to live Christ. Those who do not know this secret consider that to live Christ is a difficult thing. Actually, you just need to practice speaking with the Lord constantly; then spontaneously, you will live Christ. (*The Organic Aspect of God's Salvation*, pp. 54-55)

The issue, the result, of practicing the organic union with the Lord is that the peace of God guards our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus (v. 7). The peace of God is actually God as peace (v. 9), infused into us through our fellowship with Him by prayer. This peace is the counterpoise of troubles and the antidote to anxiety (John 16:33).

Bad news or difficult situations may cause us to worry or to be anxious. We find the antidote to this anxiety when we pray, practice communion with God, and enjoy the organic union. Then spontaneously, even unconsciously, the peace of God is transfused into our inner being. This transfused peace becomes the counterpoise of trouble and becomes the antidote to anxiety. From experience we know that through prayer we receive this antidote to anxiety when the peace of God is infused into us. Having the peace of God as the counterpoise to our troubles does not mean that the troubles will disappear. The troubles remain, but we have a counterpoise. Furthermore, the poison of anxiety is still within us, but we have an antidote—the peace of God transfused into our being through our fellowship with God in prayer. When we enjoy God as our peace, we are made calm within.

In verse 7 Paul says that the peace of God will guard our hearts and our thoughts in Christ Jesus. The Greek word rendered “guard” may also be rendered “mount guard over.” The God of peace patrols or stands guard before our hearts and thoughts in Christ. The heart is the source, and the thoughts are the issue. The peace of God guards both our hearts and our thoughts. This means that in Christ Jesus the peace of God patrols as a guard who goes back and forth before our hearts and our thoughts. The peace of God which patrols within our inner being in such a way keeps us calm and tranquil. Even though we may have many troubles and much anxiety, nothing will disturb us. This is not a mere teaching, but a word which corresponds to our experience. From experience we know that the peace of God infused into us keeps us calm.

Toward man we need the forbearance mentioned in verse 5, and with God we need the fellowship to which Paul refers in verses 6 and 7. As two leading aspects of the expression of a life that lives Christ, forbearance and fellowship cause us to remain calm inwardly. In this way we shall become a tranquil people. This does not mean, however, that nothing negative will happen to us. Rather, it means that we need not be disturbed by negative things. Do not complain about your living situation. Live Christ! The first expression of your living of Christ will be forbearance.

To say that we should be forbearing and free of anxiety does not mean that every day we shall receive only good news. Quite often Satan will send us bad news. But we need not be troubled by this bad news, for we have the peace of God, God Himself as peace, within

us, guarding our inner feelings. However, if we would experience this peace of God, we need to pray and have fellowship with God.

In 4:5-7 Paul does not mention a third thing apart from forbearance and not having anxiety. Instead, he simply points out two important aspects of a life that lives Christ—that we have forbearance, but no anxiety. When we are forbearing and free from anxiety, we are kept tranquil and in a calm atmosphere. Then we can live Christ and have the full enjoyment of Christ. (*Life-Study of Philippians*, pp. 230-232)

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IN PHILIPPIANS

Session 3

A Life of Expectation—Living Christ for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:20-21; 1:19-21a; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:14-19; 4:12, 16

I. For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ—Phil. 3:20-21:

- A. Because our citizenship is in the heavens, we should not be occupied with earthly things, the physical things needed for our existence—1 Tim. 6:6-10.
- B. In dealing with our body, we should take care of our physical need but should not indulge in excessive physical enjoyment—Phil. 3:17-19; 1 Cor. 9:27.
- C. As we await and love the Lord's glorious appearing, we should live a God-expressing and flesh-restricting life—Titus 2:12-13; Luke 21:34-36; 2 Tim. 4:8.

II. Christ “will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself”—Phil. 3:21:

- A. We are waiting for Christ to come back so that we may be brought into the ultimate consummation of God's salvation—the transfiguration of our body:
 - 1. In His salvation God first regenerated our spirit (John 3:6), now is transforming our soul (Rom. 12:2), and consummately will transfigure our body for our glorification, making us the same as Christ in all three parts of our being (1 John 3:2).
 - 2. The body of our humiliation is our natural body, made of worthless dust (Gen. 2:7) and damaged by sin, weakness, sickness, and death (Rom. 6:6; 7:24; 8:11) but the body of His glory is Christ's resurrected body, saturated with God's glory (Luke 24:26) and transcendent over corruption and death (Rom. 6:9).
- B. The transfiguration of our body is the redemption of our body for the full sonship of God—Rom. 8:23.
- C. The transfiguration of our body will be the glorification of our entire being—Rom. 8:30, 17; 1 Pet. 5:10a; 2 Tim. 2:10.
- D. The believers' arriving at glorification is the climax of their maturity in the life of God and the climax of God's salvation in life for the accomplishment of God's economy and the satisfaction of God's desire—Rev. 21:10-11.

III. The subject and the controlling concept of the book of Philippians is the experience of Christ—3:7-10; 4:13:

- A. The experience of Christ is the master key which opens the book of Philippians to us.
- B. The experience of Christ is a Body matter—1:19; 2:1-2; 4:2-3, 10, 14-20:
 - 1. Whatever is in the Body and of the Body involves mutual fellowship; the experience of Christ requires such mutuality—2:1-2; 1 Cor. 12:25.
 - 2. The experience of Christ must be in the Body and for the Body; only by experiencing Christ in the Body can we experience Him to the fullest extent—Eph. 4:16; Rom. 12:5.

- C. The secret of experiencing Christ is to be one in soul, joined in soul, like-souled, with others—Phil. 1:27; 2:2, 19-20:
 - 1. If we would experience Christ to the fullest extent in the Body, we need to be like-souled and we need to risk our soul—vv. 20, 30; Rom. 16:3-4.
 - 2. Because Timothy was like-souled with Paul, he was in the position to experience Christ to the uttermost in the Body, just as Paul was—Phil. 2:19-20; 1 Cor. 4:16-17; 16:10.

IV. Philippians is a book not only on the experience of Christ but also on living Christ—Phil. 1:19-21a:

- A. The basic thought in the Bible is that the Triune God desires to work Himself into us so that we may take Him as life and live Him—Eph. 3:16-17a; 2 Sam. 7:12-13:
 - 1. God's economy is to dispense Himself into us and to work Himself into us as our life and life supply in order to live Him—Rom. 8:2, 6, 10-11.
 - 2. God's intention is to have a group of people who are one with Him in His life and nature; those who are one with God in the divine life and nature are able to express Him—Eph. 3:19b, 21.
- B. The Christian life is a life of living Christ for the constitution and building up of the Body of Christ—4:1-3, 12, 16; Col. 1:24; 2:19:
 - 1. The Christian life is to live Christ with His divine attributes expressed in His human virtues as a part of His organic Body—Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:14.
 - 2. For the Body, we should live a life that is Christ Himself, living as parts of His Body for the universal consummation of the eternal economy of God—Eph. 3:8-11.
- C. The Christian life is not a life of ethics, religion, culture, or even morality; the Christian life is Christ—Col. 3:4:
 - 1. As believers in Christ, we should live a life which is actually Christ Himself—John 6:57.
 - 2. The standard of the Christian life is Christ, and the normal experience of Christ is to live Christ—Eph. 4:20; Col. 2:2-3, 8; Phil. 1:21a.
- D. Paul's life was to live Christ; Christ lived within Paul as his life, and Paul lived Christ without as His living; they lived together as one person with one life and one living—Phil. 1:21a; Gal. 2:20.
- E. To live Christ means that no matter what our circumstances may be, Christ is magnified in us and that we are not put to shame in anything—Phil. 1:20a; 1 John 2:28.

V. The Body of Christ is the issue of the experience of Christ, so we need to pray desperately that we would live Christ for the Body of Christ to be a reality—Phil. 1:19-21, 24; Eph. 3:14-19:

- A. The climax, the highest point, of the divine revelation in the entire Bible is to live Christ.
- B. Living Christ also requires that we love Him to the uttermost—1 Cor. 2:9; 16:22; cf. Rev. 2:4.

Session 3

A Life of Expectation—Living Christ for the Building Up of the Body of Christ

KEY VERSES

Phil. 3:20-21 **20** For our commonwealth exists in the heavens, from which also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of His glory, according to His operation by which He is able even to subject all things to Himself.

Heb. 10:23-25 **23** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope unwavering, for He who has promised is faithful; **24** And let us consider one another so as to incite one another to love and good works, **25** Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near.

MINISTRY EXCERPTS

A HEAVENLY CALLING

The Christian life on earth is a life of waiting for the Lord's return. What does it mean to wait for His return? To wait for His return means that while we live as others do, we have an expectation of His return always within us. Miss M. E. Barber was a person in whom I found no trace of thought of remaining on earth for a long time. She was genuinely waiting for the Lord's return. Once I was walking with her on a street, and she said, "Perhaps, I will meet the Lord when we turn this corner." She asked me to walk at a distance from her on the other side of the sidewalk, and repeated, "I do not know whether this will be *the* corner for me." Those who wait for the Lord's return are like a man walking down a precipitous hill; he does not know for sure when he will turn a corner and meet someone walking up the same path. Our sister genuinely expected the Lord's return daily and hourly. Notice that we are speaking of our expectation of His return, not our belief in His return...Many people are very familiar with the prophecies concerning the Lord's return, but they are not necessarily waiting for His return. We have to remember that we are heavenly citizens. We should be taught by grace to expect the Lord's return. We put no hope in this earth. We know that this earth will never change for the better. While we serve, work, and labor with God here on earth, we are calling and gathering a group of people to come under the Lord's name for His satisfaction. We serve and work for the sake of His second coming. (CWWL, Vol. 48, *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, Vol. 3, pp. 912-91)

WHAT CHRIST WILL SETTLE WHEN HE COMES

Injustice

When the Lord comes back, the first thing He will settle is injustice. Today the biggest problem in the world is injustice. Isaiah 11:4 says that the Lord will "judge the poor in righteousness, / And decide with equity for the afflicted of the land." To judge with justice is something more than what the world can do today. It is not a Christian's job. When the Lord comes again, He will execute justice.

Wars

When the Lord comes again, He will settle all wars. Today man cannot deal with the problem of wars...Everyone agrees that there should be peace, but there is no real peace. Man cannot achieve peace through war. Yet Isaiah 2:4 says that when the millennium comes, men will “beat their swords into plowshares, / And their spears into pruning hooks, / Nation will not lift the sword against nation, / Nor will they learn war anymore.” We should realize that we are not the ones to disarm others of swords and spears. We do not wage wars, and we do not stop wars in the hope of achieving peace. These are things beyond us. When Christ comes, He will annul all wars and bring in peace.

Sicknesses

When Christ comes He will settle all sicknesses. Today many people pay attention to public health, hygiene, and medical aid. But sickness will never be thoroughly eradicated today. In the Bible the two books that speak of plagues the most are Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Both books show us that plagues are in the Lord’s hand; the Lord is in control of these things. In the prophecies in Revelation and Matthew, we are told that plagues will increase in the end times. A Christian should not be given merely to the work of hygiene and medical aid. We must realize that sicknesses in this world will increase. Isaiah 33:24 says that when Christ comes, no one will say, “I am sick.” Ezekiel 47:12 says that in the new heaven and new earth, the tree of the new city will be for the healing of the nations. Hence, when the Lord comes again, the problem of sickness will be solved. (pp. 917-918)

CONSIDERING ONE ANOTHER SO AS TO INCITE ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD WORKS

Based on Hebrews 10:24-25, I believe that in the apostles’ time the church practiced the group meetings in this way...In these verses there are three crucial words: *consider*, *incite*, and *exhorting*. Verse 24 charges us to consider one another. The word *consider* is very meaningful. To consider one another implies to remember, to have a sincere, loving concern for one another. It implies that the saints are in our heart. This verse goes on to say that we should incite one another to love and good works. *Good works* here refers to giving something to others freely or doing something freely for others. To give a financial gift or to care for a sick brother is a good work. There is the need for many such good works in the Body. We need to incite one another to love and to this kind of good work. Verse 25 also says that we are to exhort one another. Considering one another, inciting one another, and exhorting one another cannot be accomplished in the big meetings. They can be carried out only in the small group meetings. (*The Practice of the Group Meetings*, pp. 46-47)

[Hebrews 10:24-25] are the basis for our practice of the group meetings...These verses first say that we need to consider one another. This implies that we have a genuine care for all the members of our vital group. To care for one another means to consider one another. Today we may not care for others. We do not really care whether or not a certain brother comes to the meeting or whether or not a certain sister is sick. The genuine care for one another needs to be recovered among us.

To consider one another in a practical way is to love one another. We say that we love one another, but in what way do we love? We may not care for anyone in a practical way. Love means practical care and consideration. When we consider one another, we incite one another to love and good works. We stir up one another. If someone cares for me, that spontaneously stirs me up, incites me, to love and good works. *To love* here is not an

infinitive. *Love* is a noun, just as *good works* is a noun. We incite one another to love and good works by caring for one another, considering one another.

We need the intimate fellowship with one another with the practical care and shepherding. One sister may point out that another sister in the group is absent because she is having some particular trouble. After sharing with the other group members the nature of the problem, the group can pray for her and fellowship about how to give her the practical care and help.

If a brother has lost his job, we should pray for him. We should also consider his material situation. This is real love. James in his Epistle says, "If a brother or sister is without clothing and lacks daily food, and any one of you says to them, Go in peace, be warmed and filled, yet you do not give them the necessities of the body, what is the profit?" (2:15-16). In his first Epistle, John says, "Whoever has the livelihood of the world and sees that his brother has need and shuts up his affections from him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word nor in tongue but in deed and truthfulness" (3:17-18). If we see brothers who are in need and merely tell them that the Lord will take care of them, that is not love. That is vain talk. We should care for one another, consider one another, in a practical way.

Without such a loving care and consideration of one another, we may be very indifferent toward the things of God's economy concerning Christ and the church. But once a brother is loved in some practical care, that impresses him and incites him to think about the Christian life and about God's economy. When a brother who is Italian cares for another brother who is Chinese, this is a marvelous testimony. This shows that the different races are swallowed up in the new man and testifies of the practical love among the members of the Body of Christ. (*Fellowship Concerning the Urgent Need of the Vital Groups*, pp. 163-164)