

Christ Magnified, whether by Life or Death

Philippians 1: 18-20.

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Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

It is the practical experience of the apostle's heart in connection with Christ that is so marked in verse 20. The heart of a believer attentive to the Spirit's teaching, must feel that one cannot read this verse, without seeing that Paul had a practical connection with the Nazarene in heaven, that he believed in a Christ who was not in heaven only, but in his own soul, so that he could think of nothing, but only of this Christ. They were, very remarkable circumstances bringing out his connection with Christ to his soul in such a way, that afterwards, led by the Spirit, he labours to show it forth. What would not be joy to the heart of Christ, he as a believer in Christ could not joy in; yet whatever had Christ for its object could not do otherwise than turn to his salvation, through prayer and the supply of the Spirit. His only thought in everything was, that "Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or death." He could say, "The labourers are one thing, and the field of labour is another; if I cannot rejoice in them, I can in the Lord, who will make all turn to my salvation, through the supply of His own Spirit." Then in verse 20, he goes on to give a beautiful picture of what occupied his whole heart; and you and I may realize it as much as he did.

Can I say that my earnest desire, and that on which my heart is set as the only thing, is that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death? Ah, Paul, that desire was not thine, but God's thought; and if thine, only thine because Christ's Spirit was in thee, leading all in thee captive to that Christ. Paul was led and sustained by another — Christ. Can you and I say that we have only one simple desire, i.e. that through us Christ should be magnified? We should shrink from saying so, lest it should not be truth. Paul did not shrink, for it was truth. We should fear lest not desiring it as a reality. He could not; for he desired it as a real thing, and it was everything with that man, picked up by Christ, that Christ should be magnified through him. To magnify anything is to make it appear larger than it is; that could not be so in connection with Christ. But Paul wanted all to shine out in him, so that Christ should be magnified through him; so shine out, that all should be able to say, "What a marvellous thing! there is a man so spending his life for Christ, that he does not care to live if he can but magnify Christ by his death! What a marvellous Person that Christ must be!"

"According to my earnest desire," etc. Not a person desiring a certain thing only, but calculating that it would be so. Paul had this expectation, that through him Christ should be glorified now in the wilderness, that now Christ should be magnified. The love of Christ constrained him, drew him along in the path after Christ. Oh, what manifestation of Christ it is, when the display of His handiwork is seen in a Saul of Tarsus; the oil of anointing so flowing down to the servant, that it could be said of that servant, "Like Master, like servant!" What a blessed servant this servant of Christ is in a dungeon, not knowing whether he was to live or die, occupied only with the one thought of glorifying Christ there, of being a fellow-helper with Him down here! Whether his feet are in fetters or not, he could say, "It is Christ I have for my portion in this dungeon; and whether I am here for life or death, it is my earnest expectation and hope that Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

Paul in prison had God's thoughts to carry out. Oh, do let us see how far the anointing that made

the soul of Paul in prison so full of joy, whether cast there for life or death, has made us fellow-workers with Paul! How far is that anointing enabling us to maintain our Nazariteship, enabling us to live out Christ, so that, whatever our circumstances, the power of the life of Christ in us may be seen as in Paul? How far is seen in us, from day to day, the mind of Christ? The same mind that led Him down, even to the death of the cross, is the mind that we ought to have. We are the Lord's free men; man could not bind Paul. I beseech you let that example, that specimen of what it was to have every desire and hope of the heart fixed on Christ, let it, I say, be ever before your souls. Not saved only, but how far, as Christ's eye rests on you, can He say, as He could in respect of Paul, "Well, there is an individual who has but one desire, but one hope, to magnify Me, whether by life or by death." Could He say of any here that all their thoughts and actions, in their own little circle, are all for Him? We are to let the power of the grace that found us, and gave us life, tell its own tale by the manifestation of that life in all our circumstances in our wilderness path.