

Commentary on Philippians 1, by Chuck Smith 4.7.24

Pastor John Donovan, cell phone 508-380-0471

Pastor Terry Gerlarneau, cell phone 603-455-4399

Web site todbc.org email us at opendoorbiblechurch@todbc.org

March & April memory verses

Ephesians 3:20 (NKJV) Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

Ephesians 3:21 (NKJV)

to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

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Paul the apostle was arrested in Jerusalem, held in prison in Caesarea for two years until he appealed to Caesar and was brought as a prisoner to Caesar in Rome, in order that he might appear before Caesar and appeal his case. While Paul was in Rome for two years awaiting his appearance before Caesar, he was under house arrest. He was able to rent his own quarters, however, twenty-four hours a day he was chained to one of the Roman guards. There were in Rome some ten thousand elite soldiers who had been appointed as the imperial guard and whose chief duty was the protection of the emperor in Rome. One of these men were chained to Paul on shifts, twenty-four hours a day, for two years. Paul saw that as a tremendous opportunity to witness. They can't get away, and as the result of Paul's witnessing to these men, many of them of Caesar's household were brought to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Quite a revival there in Rome while Paul was there awaiting his appearance before Caesar.

The church in Philippi took up an offering for him and sent him a very generous offering. It was brought to him by Epaphroditus, who on the way became extremely ill and almost died, but he brought to Paul this gift from the hearts of those in Philippi, and basically this letter that Paul writes to them from the prison in Rome is a letter of thanksgiving and gratitude for the money that they had sent to him by Epaphroditus. And so, that really was the occasion of Paul's writing this epistle. It is written not as from an apostle to the church as are most of Paul epistles, but it is written as a letter from friend to friend. There is a very warm, friendly feeling through the whole epistle; it is interesting that the tone of the epistle is one of extreme joy and rejoicing. Interesting in the fact that during the time that Paul was doing all of this rejoicing, he was chained to a Roman guard in a Roman prison. Some of you perhaps visit Rome on occasion and were led into the Mamertin prison where tradition says Paul was held. It isn't a very attractive place; it is sort of under ground, the light comes in from a window up above, but yet, Paul always had the light within him, and thus, as he declares, "I have learned in whatever state I am in to therewith be content. I know how to abound. I know how to be abased. I'm content because my contentment does not lie in my circumstances. My contentment lies in my relationship with Jesus Christ and that cannot change. My circumstances may change, I may be in tough physical circumstances, but my contentment isn't in that. My

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contentment is in Jesus." And it is important that we also learn to find our contentment in Jesus Christ, because then we can learn whatever our condition is to be content.

So, Paul opens this epistle, and along with the little letter to Philemon and 1 Thessalonians, it's the only epistle where he does not begin by the affirmation of his apostleship. Usually, it is, "Paul an apostle by the will of God." But he is writing now as a friend to a friend.

Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ (Phl 1:1),

The word *servant* here in Greek is *doulos*, which is bonds slave.

Now, there was a phrase concerning the bondslaves of Jesus Christ and that phrase went, "To serve Him is to reign as king." So, Paul a servant, but yet, to serve Jesus is to reign as a king, to be his bonds slave.

Now, the word *doulos*, bonds slave is more than just a servant. A servant was a person who was hired who had the freedom if he didn't like his job to quit and find a job someplace else. Not so with a bonds slave. Like it or not, you were the property of your owner. The servant could come and go as he pleased, not the bonds slave. Bond slavery was something that was for life. Paul the apostle, the bonds slave, Paul and Timothy bonds slaves,

to all the saints in Christ Jesus (Phl 1:1)

The word *saints* has come under a lot of abuse. We've lost the sort of meaning of the word; the word comes from the Greek word *hagios*, which means *holy*, and so really, he is writing to those who are consecrated. A lot of times you read, "Unto the saints," and you say, "Oh, this don't apply to me; I'm surely no saint." But it is unto those who are consecrated to Jesus Christ. And so the literal meaning of the word *saint*, holy or consecrated.

to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops [overseers] and deacons [workers] (Phl 1:1):

I go to the Greek word themselves to translate them so that we get the... again bishops, we think of some guy who was over a whole bunch of churches. But they were the overseers within the local church, and the deacons were the workers. Those workers within the church.

You remember Philippi was the first place Paul came to when he brought the gospel to Europe. He was in Troas. He received the vision of a man of Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us," and Paul immediately went down, caught a ship to Macedonia. They came to Philippi, and there Paul found a group of women who were worshipping on Saturday out by the river. They were Jews. Now, this means that there was not a large Jewish community in Philippi. For where in a community they have ten adult Jewish

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males, they had the obligation to build a synagogue, but if there wasn't ten adult Jewish males, then they usually met in an outdoor area, usually by a river or a place of beauty and all. And so, the indication is that there were not many Jews in Philippi, and thus, meeting by the river. Paul went out and met with the women that were there, and he shared Christ and many of them received. He started a work there in Philippi. He wasn't able to minister very long because the Jews who found out that the women were converted began to stir up trouble. They had Paul arrested. He was beaten. He was thrown into the dungeon where he and Silas at the midnight hour were singing and praising the Lord, when suddenly, the prison was shaken by an earthquake and the doors were opened and they were freed. And the jailer, realizing that awakening from his sleep and seeing what had happened, took his sword and was ready to kill himself, and Paul said, "Do yourself no harm. We are all here."

You see, under the Roman rule if you were a guard and your prisoners escaped, then you had to take the penalty of the prisoners. So, better to commit suicide, really, than to face the wrath of the Roman justice, having lost the prisoners that were entrusted to you.

And so the man came in to Paul trembling, and he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house." And so he took Paul home and washed the caked blood off of his back as a result of the beating, and then he gave him something to eat. Paul shared with the family, and they all received Jesus Christ and were all baptized. That was the beginning of the church of Philippi.

Now the magistrates of the city, those who had arrested Paul were responsible for that, they came and said, "Let him go. We don't really have charges, so just let him go." And Paul said, "Hey, wait a minute. I am a Roman citizen and I have been beaten without any charges being filed. There has been an injustice here." Philippi was one of the main Roman cities. It was supposed to have been a model of Roman justice, and so he said, "They think they are just going to send me away. Let them come down; let the mayor come down himself and pardon me, you know, and let me go." And they went back and they said, "Did you know that they are Roman citizens?" "Oh no," and he knew that he had blown it. And so, he came down and said, "Please would you get out of town. Just go, you know we are sorry, just go."

Now, from that small beginning the Spirit of God did a work. The church had grown to the place where they had to have overseers; they had deacons and administrators. The work of God had expanded, and they had taken up a generous offering for Paul and sent it to him. And so, from that early beginning God began a good work, and he did really perform a very, really special work there in Philippi. So to the overseers and the worker,

Grace be unto you, and peace ([Phl 1:2](#)),

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Now, we have come across these Siamese twins many times in the New Testament, and they are typical Pauline salutations as he opens his epistle so often with this, "Grace and peace be unto you."

from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ (Phl 1:2).

Again, I would like to emphasize, and I don't think we can too much, the fact that the Lord is not His name; it is His title. And we should not consider it or think of it as a name. We are talking of relationship when we say *the Lord*. Jesus is His name. As we were singing, "His name is Jesus, Jesus, sad hearts weep no more." His name is Jesus, or in the Hebrew, Jehoshua. But Lord is His title, and if we use the title of Lord, then that does signify that we take the position with Paul as a bondsman. It's talking of relationship from our Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you (Phl 1:3),

So Paul, every time he remembered the work of God there in Philippi, was thanking God for them.

John in writing his epistle said, "I have no greater joy than to know that my children are walking in truth" (3 John 4). I think that that can be said of the heart of every minister. The greatest joy that can come to any minister is to know that those who are really the children in the faith as the result of their ministry continue to walk in the truth.

Being in the ministry has tremendous rewards, and it is just thrilling to see the work that God does in various areas. This morning, as I was at the back door greeting the people as they were departing, there was a lady with her husband there, and their daughter, and her husband. As they approached me, I could see tears just welling up in their eyes. As they shook my hand, they said, "We are from New York and we listen to your radio program. And we have started a Bible study in our home, and we listen to your tapes and God is just blessing tremendously. We have so many people that are coming and being blessed through the word of God, and what a thrill for us to meet you and to be here today." As tears just began to stream down their face. And I tell you, you don't think that's not rewarding, to just see the fruit of the ministry. How you thank God for the work that He is doing. How you thank God for the privilege of being His instrument through which He might work.

And so Paul, God's instrument, is now giving thanks unto God for the report that comes from Philippi of their continuance in the walk and in the faith. Every time he remembered them, he would say, "Oh, thank God." Every time I think of you, I just thank God for the work that He is doing by His Spirit.

Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy (Phl 1:4),

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So he is thanking God, praying for them always, but there is always a certain joyfulness involved with it because of the work that God is doing there. And he is thanking God for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now.

Now that fellowship, ideal fellowship, the *koinonia*, is that oneness in the gospel, and no doubt also in this case refers to the support that they had given to Paul through the years. As he was writing to the Galatians, he said that they who are taught in the word ought to communicate unto them that teach in all good things. So, that the church in Philippi had been faithfully supporting Paul through the years, and so there was that oneness, the sharing, and you remember in the early church, if anyone had anything, they sold it and they brought it and laid it at the apostles feet, and they had all things in *koinonia*. This is the same Greek word here. There was just that sharing together of the welfare of their resources with Paul.

For your fellowship [or oneness, a communion] in the gospel from the first day [that he had been there in Philippi] until now [even to the present time]; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phl 1:5-6):

Which is, of course, the day in which Christ comes. The day that Christ comes for His church. I am confident that God is able to just continue the work that He started. Now, a lot of times, unfortunately, we don't have that confidence.

In the book of Hebrews, Jesus is called the author and the finisher of our faith. And we have got to realize what God has begun He is going to finish. He is not like us. He doesn't start a lot of projects that He doesn't finish. By virtue of the fact that God has begun a work in my life, I am confident that God is going to complete that work in my life. And Paul said, "We are confident of this very thing that He who has begun the good work in you will continue to perform it, unto the day that Jesus comes" (Philippians 1:6). I have that confidence.

There is another scripture that says the Lord will perfect that which concerns you. The word *perfect* means complete. God is going to complete those things that concern you. He is going to complete that work of His Spirit within your life. He has begun it. He will finish it. He is the author and the finisher.

Even as it is meet [necessary] for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace (Phl 1:7).

So, you see the personal nature of this letter. It's really from Paul's heart to them as he just opens up and bears his heart to them, and again that oneness that they share together, for they are partakers with Paul of the grace of God. And they are sharing with him, who at this time is in bonds. He is in prison because of his defense of the gospel, and so they are sharing with him through these various experiences.

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For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels [compassion] of Jesus Christ (Phl 1:8).

Paul said, "That love of Christ constrains me, I long for you with a compassion that Jesus Christ has put in my heart for you."

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment (Phl 1:9);

Now, Paul said he thanked God for the fellowship that they had together, but he also prayed for them, and this is Paul's prayer: that their love may abound more and more in all knowledge.

You know that there is a phrase, to know Him is to love Him. The reason why Jesus said, "Learn of Me," is that He wants you to know how much He loves you. Learn of Him, learn of how much He loves you, because Jesus knows the more you know Him, the more you will know His love for you and the more you know His love for you, the more response you will have towards that love in your loving Him. So that you might abound more and more in that love of Christ as you gain the knowledge of that love.

That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ (Phl 1:10);

Again, the reference to the coming of Jesus Christ. Now, He is able to keep you unto the day that He comes. And this is how Paul wants them to be: growing more and more in their love and in their knowledge that they might approve or live after those things which are excellent and be sincere.

The word *sincere*, of course, comes from the Latin word *sincere*; two words actually, *sin*, without, and *cere* is wax. Now, during the days of Rome there were a lot of artisans. Everybody was anybody who could find the hammer and the chisel and were carving away on marble, and throughout the old world, I mean, you could find all kinds of statutes. You go to the museums and just row after row after row of marble statutes, and there was just something that was very common in those days, the working in marble.

Now, in working in marble, not everyone is perfect. And it might be that you were, you know, trying to shape the nose on the statue that you were making and you slipped and you popped the nose off of the thing. Well, they became extremely clever. They would take the ground marble, mix it with wax, and they could work it out and it could put on a nose out of wax that looks so genuine you couldn't tell it. You would go down to the store, you would see this lovely statute, and say, "Oh, I like that one. I want that one in our entry hall." So you buy this statue and you take it home and put it in your entry hall, and then those hot summer days would come and you would come walking into the house, and the nose had melted and run down over the lips, and you knew it was wax.

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So the Latin word *sincere*, without wax, without phoniness, genuine. And that's the way Paul wanted them to be: genuine in their faith, no phoniness to it.

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness (Phl 1:11),

Now, the fruit of righteousness is love and joy and peace. Paul wanted them to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, filled with love, filled with joy, filled with peace.

which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel (Phl 1:11-12);

Now, they had been following Paul's career. They were aware of his arrest in Jerusalem. They were aware of his imprisonment in Caesarea, the two years as a political pawn. They were aware of his appeal to Caesar, and now they were aware of his imprisonment in Rome. Here is a man they highly respected. Here is a man they loved greatly. And to realize that he was really in prison on these trumped up charges, really with no basis. It seems like there was sort of a waste of talent. Paul had been so busy in going out and sharing the gospel, and now being in prison it seems like God has made a terrible mistake allowing this warrior of the cross to just be shut up in prison.

A lot of times we do not understand why God has allowed certain things, and from our viewpoint God has made here a serious mistake. Do you ever think that God has made some mistakes in your lives? There were a lot of times I thought God has surely made a mistake now. My circumstances, my condition, surely this is a mistake. But Paul is assuring them now, what things have happened really God has been using him for the furtherance of the gospel.

It is marvelous to be able to see the hand of God, even in those places where I am at a personal disadvantage, things that I would not personally choose for myself, to always realize that God probably has His hand in this.

The other day, Saturday, I started out of the house to come out here to the church, and suddenly I thought, "Oh, I have forgotten my glasses." So, I went back into the house to get my glasses and I didn't see them on the counter, and I realized they were in my pocket. It's what they call senility. It comes with old age. But as I was going back out to the car, the thought came to me, "I wonder if the Lord was sparing me from an accident." You know accidents happen with such precision, split-second timing, that just a moment's delay at this point could very well be protecting you from some accident down the road. So I said, "Thank you, Lord. You know things I don't know, and you are watching over even your dumb little sheep, and you are taking care of those who don't have enough sense to take care of themselves. Whatever it was, whatever purpose, thanks Lord! I appreciate You watching over me."

Now, it is important and it is good to realize that whatever happens to me is happening for a good purpose. God has a plan in mind for my life. So that Paul, as he said to the

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Roman church, "All things work together for good to those that love God" (Romans 8:28). Paul is seeing here the good that God is bringing forth from his imprisonment. He is wanting to encourage them who would be prone to question God or doubt God because this marvelous apostle is being wasted in prison. He was assuring them that God's hand and purpose are being accomplished by his imprisonment. "I want you to know that these things that have happened to me, have really happened for the furtherance of the gospel."

When Paul was being brought to Rome and went through that tremendous storm for over fourteen days there in the Mediterranean, he had warned the captain not to set sail. He said, "I perceive a real danger is going to come to us." But the captain told the Roman centurion, "What does that guy know about the seas. I am a captain. I have been on these seas all my life. He is a land lover and doesn't know anything. We can sail." So the centurion said, "Okay, sail." Then they got in that horrible storm where for fourteen days they did not see the sun or stars; the ship was tossed to and fro in the Mediterranean. The mast was broken. They had thrown out all their cargo. They had just really placed themselves, finally, at the mercies of the sea. Everyone was seasick and miserable, and after fourteen days of this, Paul stood up and told them, "I told you that you shouldn't have started out." I love those people. He said, "Be of good cheer. The angel of the Lord stood by me last night and told me that though the ship will be wrecked and destroyed, all of the lives will be saved."

Well, the Lord wanted to reach the governor of the island of Malta, and that was just an unusual way of getting Paul to Malta. It wasn't on their planned journey, so God detoured them to Malta. There was no way Paul could have talked the captain in going to Malta. The Lord had souls on Malta that He wanted to reach, so Paul had really a great experience witnessing to the natives and a real revival started and, I am sure, a continuing work of God there on the island of Malta as the result of Paul's visit.

Now, this imprisonment, brought from Malta into Puteoli, on into Rome, and now in prison, but it is all happening for the furtherance of the gospel.

So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all of the palace [or the pretorium], and in all other places (Phl 1:13);

Now, the palace would have been Nero's palace there in Rome. As we read in other accounts, many of Nero's servants came to know Jesus Christ.

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear (Phl 1:14).

They see how Paul's testimony is so fearless, how Paul is leading so many of these imperial guards to Jesus Christ. And the boldness of Paul's witness and all emboldened many of them to also begin to really witness for the Lord and to witness boldly for the Lord. Paul said, "It has all happened for good. It is all working out. God is working in this

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whole thing. My imprisonments and my experiences really are furthering the work of the gospel."

Now he said,

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds (Phl 1:15-16):

Paul, because he was a dynamic leader and a strong leader, had his enemies as well as his friends. That is the price of leadership. Just the very fact that God is using you is going to create enmity, jealousy, animosity, in the hearts of people. Paul was no exception. There were those who were jealous of Paul's ministry and what God was doing through Paul. They thought to take advantage of the fact he is in bonds. They are going to go out and they are going to try and do their work, out of contention. Their motive was contention, rivalry; rivalry against Paul, building up their own little flock or whatever. Their motives were really wrong in what they were doing, but the very fact that they were doing it, Paul rejoiced.

I think that this is just a tremendous example of the true Christian minister. He doesn't care who is getting the credit; all he cares is that the work of Christ is being accomplished. So God is blessing the Baptist church and it's bursting at the seams; praise the Lord! The Spirit of God is moving in the hearts of those people. Rather than feeling jealous or competitive, rather than saying, "I don't know why God would bless them when we are so much better than they are." You rejoice that God is working and that the work of God is being accomplished. Even if a person comes in with wrong motivations, and they say, "I don't like that Chuck Smith. I am bitter at him. I am going to rip off a part of his flock. We're going to establish our ministry right down the block, and we are going to pick up the disgruntles and everyone else that comes out of there." Praise the Lord people are being ministered to. They are disgruntled with me. They won't come here anymore. Well, bless God there is a place for the disgruntles to meet.

Christ is being preached. The motive may not be right within their hearts, but that doesn't matter. Paul said, "To me I am thrilled that the work of God is spreading in this community." Some of them have wrong motives, contentions, really trying to add to Paul's afflictions.

But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice (Phl 1:17-18).

So beautiful!

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, whether it be by life, or by death (Phl 1:20).

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At this point, Paul was facing Caesar Nero, and he really did not know whether or not he would receive the sentence of death from Nero. Now, he knew that Nero had a general opposition to the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He knew that Nero saw Jesus Christ as a threat. Nero had ordered that the people confess that Caesar is Lord. Those that refused to confess that Caesar was Lord would be put to death. Paul was going to be facing now this little tyrant. He says, "Pray for me that I might be as bold as I have always been, not going to back down now in this situation, just because I am going to be facing this tyrant Caesar. My expectation, my hope that I will not be ashamed, that I will speak the truth boldly, though the consequence may be my head."

It is interesting from a historical standpoint that Paul appeared before Caesar Nero twice. Once, on his appeal in Caesarea, he had appealed to Caesar, and the first time Paul appeared, Caesar Nero set him free. The charges were baseless. Paul was set free. A couple of years later he was rearrested and brought back to Rome and Caesar Nero ordered him beheaded. So, Paul died a martyr death and he was beheaded by the edict of Caesar Nero. But, as you look at history, an interesting thing: number one, we know that Jesus had told his disciples that they were going to be hailed before the magistrates and before kings. But He said, "Don't take any forethought what you are going to say because in that hour the Holy Spirit will give you the words, and these things will turn for your testimony, or the appearances will give you an opportunity to testify." So, as you read Paul's defenses before the judges and before the kings, he appeared before King Agrippa; he appeared before Felix and before Festus. On every occasion Paul took the occasion to testify, to tell of the work of God's Spirit in his life, and he witnessed to his being born again by the power of Jesus Christ. Every time that he appeared before any of these magistrates, it was just to Paul an opportunity to testify for Jesus Christ. The higher the position of the person before whom Paul was appearing, the more fervent was Paul's testimony, the more earnest was Paul in his endeavor to convert the person, because Paul always thought, "Wow, with the influence and position this guy has, think of what it could do for the gospel if he were saved."

When he appeared before King Agrippa, man, did he ever lay on a heavy testimony. When he was coming to the close, he said, "Agrippa, do you believe the scriptures? I know you believe the scriptures." And he was really coming to the close, and Festus cried out, "Paul, you're crazy! You have been studying too hard. You have lost your mind." Paul came right back and began to press Agrippa, until he said, "Wait a minute, you mean you are trying to convert me to be a Christian? You're trying to persuade me?" Paul said, "I sure wish you were, just like me, except I wouldn't wish you to have these bonds on you. But oh, how I wish you were."

Paul appearing before Nero, don't you know he really turned it on. I mean, he felt no doubt, if I can convert Nero, think of what that will do for the gospel if the emperor becomes a Christian. I am sure he laid on the heaviest witness anybody has ever heard at any time in history when he got before Nero.

It is interesting as you study the history of Nero, up to this point in history, up to the point that Paul appeared before him, he was a fairly decent ruler. After Paul's

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appearance, there was a sudden and dramatic change in Nero's personality recorded in history. He became almost a mad man. In fact, many did think that he became insane. There is that likelihood that God, through Paul, was giving to Caesar Nero the opportunity of being saved and the testimony and the witness was so powerful, that in his rejection of that testimony, his complete rejection of Jesus Christ, that Caesar Nero at that point became demon possessed. There are certainly things in history to indicate demon possession in Caesar Nero, and also in the scriptures.

Caesar Nero became a madman. In his persecution of the church, he became inhumane. They would tie Christians on posts in his garden, cover them with tar, and set them on fire to light his garden in the evening, as he would get in his chariot naked and race through the paths of his garden. Christians lighting them, torched there in the garden. It was inhumane and horrible.

It is an interesting study as you study carefully the history of Nero, and this dramatic change just about the time that Paul witnessed to him. He then, of course, burned Rome in his desire to build a new and greater Rome, one that would be named after him and leave his monument, and then blame the Christians. That was when Paul was recalled and arrested in Ephesus, and brought back to Rome, and then beheaded by Caesar Nero.

Now, whether or not Paul was writing it during the first imprisonment or second is not known for certain. It was probably the first, but even at this point, his outcome is uncertain. Paul expresses, "Hey, my desire is that Christ be magnified in my body. Whether by life or by death, I really don't care. I just want to live for the glory of Jesus Christ." "God forbid," he wrote, "that I should glory except in the cross of Jesus Christ. I am not looking for anything for myself; I am looking that my life will bring glory and honor to Christ. That Christ be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death, doesn't make any difference."

For to me to live is Christ ([Phl 1:21](#)),

He is the center of my existence. My life revolves around him.

Again, if you were to say, "To me to live," what would you have to say? To me to live is the Indy 500. To me to live is playing a guitar. To me to live is... And so many people are living for so many things. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ." Because he said for me to live is Christ, he can also say,

and to die is gain ([Phl 1:21](#)).

You can't say that if you are living for anything else. To me, to live is to be wealthy, to mass a fortune, and to die is to lose it all. To die is loss. You can only say to die is gain when you have lived your life for Jesus Christ. That is why if a person lives their life for Jesus Christ, we don't have to, and we should not, grieve over their death. We can grieve over our loss. We sorrow, but not as those who have no hope; we sorrow

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because we are going to miss them. But, we don't sorrow for them. We don't grieve for them. For if a person is living for Christ, to die is gain.

But if I live in the flesh [I really don't know what is going to happen now], this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not [I really don't know] (Phl 1:22).

If you ask, "What would you choose, Paul? Do you want to live or die?" I really don't know. For he said,

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better (Phl 1:23):

Now, if soul sleep was a legitimate doctrine, then Paul the apostle surely did not understand the doctrine. He would not then express himself this way concerning death. "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be asleep, awaiting the great day of the Lord. No, I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ." Paul's understanding that death would free his spirit from his body, that his spirit might immediately be with the Lord in Heaven.

In writing his second letter to the Corinthians, he said, "For we know that when this tent, the earthly body in which we presently live, is dissolved, that we have a building of God that is not made with hands that is eternal in the heavens. So then, we who are still living in these bodies do often groan earnestly desiring to be freed from them, not that I would be in an unembodied spirit, not that I would be unclothed, but that I might be clothed upon with the body which is from heaven. For we know that as long as we are living in these bodies, we are absent from the Lord. So we would choose rather to be absent from these bodies, and to be present with the Lord." Consistent with what he is saying here to the Philippians.

"For I have the desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. So I really don't know what to choose. I am really in a strait. I'm facing life or death, and I don't know, but I don't really know what I want." There is a desire. We in this body groan earnestly, desiring to be freed from these bodies. Not to be unembodied, but to be clothed upon with the body which is in heaven. So, we in these bodies groaning earnestly desiring. So I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.

Now, do you really believe that? You see, we have the wrong attitude towards death. "Oh, my, what a shame, what a pity that he should die. Oh, how terrible, what a loss." You just don't understand what death is for the child of God. But Paul said,

Nevertheless to abide in the flesh [for me to continue to stay in this body of flesh] is more needful for you (Phl 1:24).

"You need me. Now, I would like to go, my desire is to go and be with Christ, but you need me. I am torn, torn by your need of my continued ministry, and by my desire to be with the Lord." I think that that is always true, we are sort of in a strait betwixt two. When

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we think of the Lord and being with Him in heaven, "Oh, man, I love to be with the Lord." But yet, we look at our family and they still need us and the responsibility is all around us and we think, "They still need me." There is that torn feeling.

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith (Phl 1:25);

So, Paul was confident at this point that he was going to be exonerated, which he was, and to continue for a little while yet with them.

That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation [manner of life] be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent [Now, if he takes my head], I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit [Now, whether I stay in jail actually that when I hear of you, that this is what I'll hear: that you are standing fast in one spirit], with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel (Phl 1:26-27);

So the desire for the church: one faith, one mind, working together for the faith of the gospel.

And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phl 1:28-29);

Wait a minute, I thought I heard an evangelist the other night saying that no Christian ever needed to suffer if he just had enough faith. Evidently, he didn't read Philippians 1. It is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but to suffer for His sake.

Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me (Phl 1:30)