



BIBLE
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Bible Expositor and Illuminator

WINTER QUARTER

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LOOKING AHEAD

This quarter we offer a rich set of lessons on the vital theme titled “Living in Christ.” In studies from Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon (with one passage from John), we explore multiple aspects of the new life Christ gives us.

Unit I starts us in Paul’s letter to the Philippians, with the apostle’s affirmation that “to live is Christ” (1:21). There can be no greater security than knowing that our life is from Him and that it is guaranteed for eternity. Lesson 2 shows us that in light of all that Christ has done for us, the allurements of this world are worthless in comparison. When we master these truths, we find that we also experience great contentment. Paul speaks of this in lesson 3, where he shows the secret of having joy in all types of circumstances.

For Christmas, lesson 4 takes us to the incarnation of Christ as revealed in John 1, then transitions to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. There we learn how we are to be lights in our world in imitation of the Light that came into the world.

Our second unit continues in Ephesians, focusing on how our lives are transformed in Christ. Paul sets the foundation (lesson 5) by exploring how we have been chosen in Christ from eternity past. Lesson 6 builds on that, showing that we are God’s workmanship, chosen by Him to do good works that display His glory.

In lesson 7 we are reminded that we do not live for Christ in isolation. We have been made part of the household of God, a holy temple to the Lord. Lesson 8 expands on the high calling that we have been given in Christ. As we live in this world, we are to maintain the unity in the Spirit that He has brought us into. In lesson 9, we learn how to honor God in our family life.

Unit III, on living lives worthy of Christ, continues with one more lesson in Ephesians, focusing on the spiritual armor God provides for living victoriously in Him. Lesson 11 moves to the epistle to the Colossians, where Paul emphasizes Christ’s supremacy over all things. Lesson 12 underscores how we are complete in Christ.

The quarter ends with the short letter from Paul to his friend Philemon. It is a personal appeal, but the lesson on extending Christlike forgiveness applies to all of us.

—Kenneth Sponsler.

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CHRIST IS WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT

STEPHEN H. BARNHART

Most of us have experienced a time, perhaps on a vacation or on a beautiful summer night, when we just feel like saying, "This is the life." Everything just seems to be perfect. You wish it could go on like this forever.

We soon discover, of course, that in this fallen world things do not go on like this forever. We should be grateful for the good gifts of God's creation, but the things of this world will never provide a satisfaction that lasts.

In Paul's Prison Epistles, especially in Philippians, the apostle lays out for us what life is really all about. And the wonder of it is that he could find joy and satisfaction even while he was under house arrest in Rome, with the threat of death hanging over him and even with some fellow believers bearing him ill will.

What enabled Paul to think and live the way he did? The answer is that for him, life meant Christ. As he said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

What are the implications of Paul's statement? He details some of these for us. For one thing, when we recognize that Christ is the meaning of life, we can trust confidently that in God's providence all things will work toward the end of exalting the Lord. This is how the apostle could retain his good spirit when people were preaching the gospel out of spite or just to see him suffer in some way. He knew that no matter the motivation of his antagonists, God would use it to glorify the Saviour (vss. 15-18).

Another implication of Paul's statement that to live is Christ is that he was able to gauge properly what his prior-

ities should be. What a person has a passion for will determine what he lives for. The apostle Paul was completely inspired by a passion to know Christ better, to deepen his relationship with Him. All the things that he had given up when he became a Christian he now counted to be as "dung". He said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (3:8).

Paul realized that to know Christ meant to know the power of resurrection life, but he also knew that it would entail experiencing to some degree the sufferings of Christ as well. When such times of suffering came, he would not be discouraged by them but would see them as means of growth in his knowledge of the Lord.

Another priority of Paul as he lived for Christ would be not to dwell in the past but instead to look forward to all that lay ahead as he moved toward fulfilling the high call of Christ on his life (vss. 13-14). For the Christian, the best always lies ahead. There is always more to live for. The disappointments of this world are not the final word.

Paul was a realist. He knew that the believer would face temptations to take the easy path and get sidetracked by the allure of the world. With sorrow in his heart, he warned about those who would serve gods of their own making (vs. 19).

To counteract this threat, the apostle held out the sure promise of the transforming power of Christ. All those who belong to Him will one day be like Him because He "is able even to sub-

(Editorials continued on page 186)

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

PHIL. 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

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

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your

prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

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, whether *it be* by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

22 But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

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

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

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

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

NOTES

To Live Is Christ

Lesson Text: Philippians 1:12-26

Related Scriptures: Acts 28:11-16, 30-31; I Corinthians 3:5-9;
II Corinthians 5:1-9; II Timothy 4:6-8

TIME: A.D. 60-61

PLACE: from Rome

GOLDEN TEXT—“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” (Philippians 1:20).

Introduction

If you have ever become drowsy while driving, you know how dangerous it can be to lose your focus. When we stop seeing clearly, we can get into trouble in a hurry.

As Christians, it is possible for us to let our spiritual focus become blurry. Some Christians have an undefined focus in their lives, which leads to inefficiency and uncertainty. Others have an unworthy focus because they spend their lives on what cannot satisfy them or please God. Many people have an unfulfilled focus, for they are unwilling to pay the price of obedience to the Lord.

Paul focused his life on God's pro-

gram. The driving force in his life was God's command to work for the progress of the gospel. This progress in God's program could be measured by the progress of God's people. Paul wanted to invest his life in advancing God's work by building laborers for the Lord.

LESSON OUTLINE

- I. **PUTTING CHRIST'S CAUSE BEFORE COMFORT—Phil. 1:12-14**
- II. **PUTTING CHRIST'S PURPOSE BEFORE PRIDE—Phil. 1:15-18**
- III. **PUTTING CHRIST'S DUTY BEFORE DESIRE—Phil. 1:19-26**

Exposition: Verse by Verse

PUTTING CHRIST'S CAUSE BEFORE COMFORT

PHIL. 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

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