



Philippians

Living a Happy and Holy Life

Week 4

The Christian life – Part I (continued)

2:12-18, Our response to Paul’s “master story”

2:19-30, Future plans: Timothy and Epaphroditus



Jesus’ Exaltation

- ❖ To this point, Jesus has been the “doer.” Now, God acts!
 - The giving of a name bestows status and power. The name bestowed here is the name of God.
- ❖ The exaltation of Jesus speaks to what Luke breaks down into his resurrection and ascension.
- ❖ Think of it as the establishment of Jesus as Lord over all the cosmos. There is no place, no thing, no one that is outside Jesus’ Lordship.
 - There are political overtones to this. There can be only one Lord and it isn’t Caesar!
- ❖ Notice that every knee bows and every tongue confesses.
 - This is taken from Isaiah 45:23.
 - “Under the earth” refers to the dead, part of the three-fold plan of the cosmos for the ancients.



Why did Paul use this hymn?

- ❖ We know of no Christological issues in Philippi, nor are there big moral issues that Paul is trying to deal with.
- ❖ The hymn lifts up Jesus' self-denying service and obedience, his faithfulness even unto death, death on a cross.
- ❖ Paul is using a theological cannon over the pettiness and squabbles that undermine the Philippians' unity.
 - This is common in Paul. Theology is not the realm of the scholars, but the life of the church. It goes to an age-old problem: we make our god too small!!

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“Therefore . . .”

- ❖ Always pay attention to the connecting words. Here, Paul follows his master story with a “therefore.” We look back to understand what he says next.
- ❖ A call for obedience
 - God has instructed us on how we ought to live, how we were created to live – now live in that way!
 - What does an obedient, i.e., holy, life look like and how do we live it?
- ❖ Work out your own salvation?
- ❖ With fear and trembling?

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Work out your own salvation?

- ❖ Paul isn't contradicting his own proclamation that our salvation is God's gracious work. Look back at v. 29.
- ❖ But God's work demands a response. We are to love God and love others . . . we are to be obedient.
 - To paraphrase Paul and James – a faith without fruit isn't faith at all. Paul can't imagine a faith in Jesus that doesn't result in real change. Being born anew by the Spirit of Christ must mean something in how we live.
- ❖ But how do we become obedient, i.e., more loving, more like Christ? It is God at work in us!! See v. 13.
- ❖ FYI – the “your” and “you” here are plural.

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“With fear and trembling” -- the numinous

- ❖ In the Old Testament, there are many personal encounters with God, such as Moses at the burning bush or the pillar of fire.
 - These are frightening experiences, but good ones. They are frightening and attractive, daunting and fascinating.
 - “Theophanies” (manifestations of God) described by the Israelites (a pillar of fire, thunder, and so on) are often powerful and violent. But Elijah encounters God in the “sound of sheer silence.”
- ❖ Holiness has nonrational, rational, and moral aspects. We often tend to equate holiness with goodness alone. Rudolph Otto invented the word “numinous” to denote the “extra” in holiness above and beyond goodness.
- ❖ What is the effect on us of the numinous? Shuddering “awefilled-ness” . . . Overpoweringness . . . energy and urgency.
- ❖ There is great mystery here. The writers often use “like a . . .” to describe what they see and feel. But we also find here comfort and love, grace and mercy. We are drawn to this loving God.
- ❖ Our challenge is to hold all this together. It is the numinous that stops us from reducing God to our “buddy.”

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Running in vain?

- ❖ Paul urges the Philippians to live in God's way, without blemish" even in a very blemished world. They will shine like stars in a dark world.
- ❖ It is the lives of the Philippians that will be the evidence that Paul's work has not been in vain.
 - Again, we see that Paul is a very practical, "down-to-earth," man who understands the need for results, not just efforts.
- ❖ Again (v.17 & 18), Paul is in this with them and they with him. Even if he is executed, he will rejoice with them for their lives in Christ.

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Timothy (v. 19-24)

- ❖ One of Paul's closest companions and co-workers. A younger man whom Paul trusts fully (see v. 20). Timothy is the recipient of two NT letters from Paul.
- ❖ Based on what we can infer from Paul's other letters, Timothy may have been Paul's co-worker for ten years or more.
- ❖ Paul himself characterizes their relationship as that of a father and son.
- ❖ Timothy won't carry this letter but will go to Philippi as soon as Paul learns whether he will be executed or be released.
 - Notice that Paul reiterates his belief that he will be released (v. 24).

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Epaphroditus (v. 25-30)

- ❖ Another very personal section of the letter.
- ❖ Notice how Paul lifts up Epaphroditus – brother, co-worker, fellow soldier, messenger and minister.
 - Why do you think Paul does this? It seems almost a bit over the top.
 - It is possible, though far from certain, that Paul is concerned the Philippians will be upset with Epaphroditus for returning early, even for leaving Paul.
- ❖ It seems, based on v. 28, that Epaphroditus brought the Philippians' gift to Paul.
- ❖ As always, don't we wish we had more than one side of this conversation.

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