

Phillippians: The Life of Christ

by Stephen Kaung

The letter to the Philippians reveals Paul's personal life and experiences as a man of God, emphasizing the importance of maintaining heavenly citizenship.

Duration: 1:09:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 16:6, Acts 16:9-10

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the difficult situation that the apostle Paul found himself in. Despite facing imprisonment and various challenges, Paul remained steadfast in his faith. The speaker encourages the audience to reflect on their own circumstances and consider how they would react in similar situations. The sermon also highlights the story of Paul and Silas in prison, where they demonstrated their unwavering faith through singing and praying, even in the midst of their suffering. The sermon emphasizes the power of God's presence and the transformative impact it can have on individuals, as seen in the conversion of the Roman jailer and his household.

Transcript

June the 17th, 1973, in Richmond, Virginia. Ministry is being given to Brother Stephen Kong. The opportunity of being together.

And as we look to him, we trust that he will not fail us. May we read from the book of Acts, chapter 16, verse 6. Acts, chapter 16, verse 6. And having passed through Phrygia and the Galatian country, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak a word in Asia, having come down to Mysere, they attempted to go to Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. And having passed by Mysere, they descended to Troas.

And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. There was a certain Macedonian man standing and beseeching him and saying, Pass over into Macedonia and help us. And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go forth to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to announce to them the glad tidings.

Having sailed therefore away from Troas, we went in a straight course to Samos, Phrygia, and on a morrow to Neapolis. And things propheticized, which is the first city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city certain days.

And on the Sabbath day, we went outside the gate by the river, where it was the custom for prayer to be. And we sat down and spoke to the women who had assembled. And a certain woman by name Lydia, a seller of purple of the city of Caetera, who worshipped God's word, whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul.

And when she had been baptized and her house, she besought us saying, If ye have just need to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us. The letter to the Philippians, chapter one, just part of one verse.

Chapter one, verse 21, the first part. For, for me to live, is Christ. For me to live is Christ.

Of all the letters Paul wrote to the churches, the letter to the Philippians is the most intimate letter he wrote to a church. In writing this letter, he was able to open his heart without any reservation, without any fear of misunderstanding. He was able to just pour out what is deep in his heart to that church that loved him so much and which he loved so much.

I think it is a most satisfying experience if you are able to open your heart to some people without any fear. You know, that is a tragedy in this world. We are not able.

We are afraid to open our hearts to one another. Not because we do not have the need. Not because we do not want to.

But because we are afraid. If we shall open our hearts to anybody, we are open to misunderstanding. We are giving ourselves away.

And people can take hold of what we have said and turn against us. And for this reason we become all very wise. We try to be very polite.

We try to be very diplomatic. We try to say a lot without saying anything. And that is the way in this world.

And of course, we know this is very unsatisfying. Deep down in our heart we know how satisfying it will be if we can open our hearts to one another. We can trust one another.

We can believe one another. And we know we can trust one another without any fear, any reservation. And this was the case between Paul and the church in Philippi.

And for this reason this letter to the Philippines has a very unique place in the Bible. There in this letter Paul was able to share with these saints in Philippi his secret. You know there are actually two letters in the New Testament.

Two letters written by Paul that reveal Paul. One is the second letter to the Corinthians and the other is the letter to the Philippines. But there is a difference between these two letters.

In the second letter to the Corinthians Paul, in a sense, revealed himself to the Corinthians. But he was forced to do that. But in the letter to the Philippines he voluntarily and willingly did it.

In the second letter to the Corinthians he revealed himself more as a servant of the Lord, as a minister of Jesus Christ. In other words, it was his ministry being questioned. His ministry being challenged.

And because of that he was forced to reveal himself as a minister of Jesus Christ. But in the letter to the Philippians he was not trying to reveal what his ministry was. He was revealing what his life was.

Not the ministry, but the person. Not the work, but the man. So if we want to know Paul as a man of God we have to read the letter to the Philippians.

Because there he opens up to us his secret of life as a man of God. So I do hope that probably this time when we are fellowshiping together we may be able to share something, receive something from him of that secret. Now first of all I think tonight we will go into some background because I think this will help us in our understanding.

The Philippi was a Roman colony. You know the city Philippi was founded by Philip, the king of Macedonia, father of Alexander the Great. He founded this city Philippi in 368 B.C., before Christ.

Why? Because Philippi was so located that it had a strategic value for the communication between the east and the west. The road from the east to the west passed through Philippi. There was a range of hills and at that place there was a pass, there was a bridge.

So Philippi had a very strategic place in the west. And when the Romans conquered the world at that time they made Philippi a Roman colony. And you find in the book of Acts that we have just read Philippi a Roman colony.

Now what is a Roman colony? The Roman colony is an invention. A very clever invention of the Romans. Why? Because they conquered the whole world at that time.

Their territory spread wide and broad. And the Romans in order to govern such a big empire they built roads to connect all these places. So the Romans were famous for their roads.

But with only roads was not sufficient. So along the roads at strategic points of these roads they built colonies. Now but a Roman colony is very different from the sense of colony in the modern sense.

Now in the modern sense we think of colonies say some country they colonized an uncivilized place. And that is a colony. No, in the Roman sense it is entirely different.

In the Roman sense that was the way they established a colony. When they found that there was a strategic point on the Roman road they were set a colony there. And the way they did it was they were sent out approximately 300 families.

Families of veteran soldiers. People who had fought for the Roman Empire. People who had done something for the Empire.

And as a reward in one sense they were sent out about 300 veteran soldiers with their families. And they were sent them to that strategic point. And there they were set up a Roman colony.

In that colony everything was Roman. It was a small Rome. A miniature of Rome.

The language they used in that colony was the Roman language. The dress they dressed themselves was the Roman dress. The customs that were kept were the Roman customs.

And even the magistrates were called by Roman names. Everything was Roman. It was just a tiny Rome in some part of the world.

And being a Roman colony those who were the colonies they were Roman. They were so proud of themselves being Roman they refused to change what it was their pride to be Roman. Now that was a Roman colony.

And whenever something happened one colony will reinforce the other colony very quickly because of the roads that connect these colonies. And that was the way the Romans ruled their Empire. Now brothers and sisters it is for this reason you find Paul in writing the letter to the Philippians he mentioned this matter that our citizenship is in heaven.

In other words we are heavenly colonies on earth. God is establishing his kingdom on earth. And how does he control his kingdom? By establishing his colonies here and there.

And even though we are colonized in Richmond, Virginia this is a heavenly colony. This is a small heaven. This is a small kingdom of God here.

And brothers and sisters as if Paul reminds us now don't forget that those Roman colonies they were so proud of themselves being Roman they refused to be diluted they refused to be changed. It was their pride. How about us? We are colonies heavenly colonies on earth.

We are representing heaven. We are representing the kingdom of God on earth. But are we proud of our citizenship being in heaven? Or do we try to hide our citizenship? Or are we trying to imitate? Trying to copy? Trying to squeeze ourselves to the mold of this world? Or are we here to maintain that heavenly position that heavenly manner that heavenly language that heavenly atmosphere? And this is what is behind the letter to the Philippians.

In other words, Paul was trying to counsel them and encourage them now don't be discouraged. You are a heavenly colony. Maintain your color.

Don't be afraid. And brothers and sisters in the strategy of God He will establish a colony here and a colony there. And that is what the church really is.

A church here, a church there. In different localities. In different places.

Why? Strategically located to bring the kingdom of God to this earth. Paul moved into Philippi. It was not planned by Paul.

You know, after Paul had revisited Phrygian and Galatian countries during his first missionary trip Barnabas and Paul they went through these Galatian countries. And then during his second trip he revisited these churches. And after he finished visiting them he was traveling west.

But in his heart he was thinking of south. And that is Asia. Now Asia here is not Asia as a continent.

It is Asia as a Roman province. Asia at that time was a Roman province. Very densely populated.

So after Paul had finished his trip through the Phrygian and Galatian countries he was thinking of going to Asia to preach the gospel. But strangely the Holy Spirit forbade him to go to Asia. And being forbidden to go to Asia naturally he lit his eyes towards the north.

Bithynia. It was another Roman province densely populated. The need was great there.

So he was thinking of going to Bithynia to preach the gospel and again the Spirit of Jesus forbidden him. So he had to travel straight west until he came to Tuas. And Tuas was a city by the side of the sea.

Of the Aegean Sea. So he came to Tuas that is to say he came to the end of his road. Because beyond that will be the sea.

And it was that night God gave him a vision. A dream. And he saw a vision of Macedonia was calling him for help.

Come over and help us. And the next morning when he began to share his dream, his vision with his fellow travelers and at that time of course we know there was Silas there there was Timothy there and also there was Luke there. Because the beloved physician Luke joined them at Tuas.

If you read carefully the book of Acts you will find this is where the we began. Instead of they, the we began. In other words Luke was there included.

So when he shared his vision, his dream with his fellow travelers with his fellow companions we all decided. We all saw that it was the Lord. The Lord was calling us to go over the sea into Macedonia.

Brothers and sisters you know this is a very important move of the Holy Spirit. Why? Because this was the first time the gospel was brought to Europe. Macedonia was Europe.

Before that time the gospel was more or less confined to Asia as a continent. And certainly the gospel had not been preached to all Asia. There were many places where the gospel was still not preached.

For instance Asia the Roman province. This near the Roman province. These were the places that Paul was thinking of going and preaching the gospel.

But the Holy Spirit did not allow him to do that. Not because there was no need. But because God had his own timing.

Later on you will find Paul would spend three years in Ephesus. Ephesus was the capital, the center of Asia as a Roman province. In other words God had his own timing.

Not because of the need. But because God's strategy. God's timing.

You know sometimes we are guided purely by need. If we are guided by need you will find very often the needs are so great. How can you fulfill all the needs? It's very difficult to decide.

But if we are governed by God by the direction, the guidance of the Holy Spirit then the problem is solved. It is just God's timing. So instead of allowing Paul to work in Asia God sent Paul overseas to Europe.

And the gospel was brought to Europe. It was the initiation of the Holy Spirit. Not human planning.

How important it is when we come to God's work when we come to the things of God that it should be initiated by God not planned by man. And this move to Europe was God's plan. So Paul and his fellow travelers they came to Philippi that Roman colony.

First city in Macedonia. In that colony probably there were not many Jews because it was so Roman. In many cities you will find the Jews had synagogue.

But in Philippi that important city that Roman colony there was no synagogue. Now according to Jewish customs if you have ten men of leisure ten Jewish men of leisure you can have a synagogue. Now by men of leisure doesn't mean that men that do not do any work.

It simply means that men who have who are willing to devote some time for Judaism. And in the city of Philippi there wasn't even ten Jewish men of leisure in that city. And because of that there was no synagogue.

Only the Jewish women. They went outside the gate of the city by the river to pray together. There was a women's prayer group.

And very often you'll find the women they are more interested in spiritual things than the men. The men probably are so busy with their business and there are not even ten men of leisure. But the women would like to worship the Lord the women would like to pray to the Lord so there was a women's prayer meeting.

A women's prayer group outside the city by the river. So after Paul entered into Philippi as it was his custom he always inquired. Whenever he went he would go to the synagogue first.

Because in his time it was to the Jews first and then to the Greeks. But there was no synagogue. So as he inquired around well he learned that there was a women's prayer group by the river side.

So he went to join the women's prayer group. He went there. And as he was there he preached Christ to these women.

Not only the Jewish women but in that prayer group there were Gentiles too. Probably proselytes. You know during Paul's time there were quite a number of Gentiles became proselytes.

They were attracted to Judaism because of the purity simplicity of worship. Some may be full proselytes. They even were circumcised.

But others may be proselytes of the gate. In other words they just accepted the teaching of Judaism without going through all the rituals. Now we do not know but at least you'll find in that prayer group, women's prayer group there were Gentile women there.

Probably half proselytes. And when Paul was preaching Christ to this group strangely enough God opened the heart of one woman by the name of Lydia. Now Lydia was from Tyre.

And you know Tyre was in Asia. Was in the Roman province of Asia. Now you remember in the book of Revelation the Lord sent seven letters to the seven churches in Asia.

And one of the churches in Asia is the church in Tyre. So this woman came from Tyre. She came to Philippi.

Why? Probably on business. Because she was a business woman. She was a trader of purple.

Now during those days purple were the most expensive cloth during those days. Only the very rich the noble there they were purple. And this Lydia was a trader.

Was a business woman seller of purple. In other words she must be a very wealthy woman. She was like a merchant princess.

And the Lord opened her heart. And she accepted the Lord. She was baptized in her house.

In other words the whole household of Lydia turned to the Lord. And after she turned to the Lord she constrained Paul and his companions to move to their home. He said if you believe that I really trust in the Lord then you have to accept my love and my hospitality.

Now that was how it first started. You know brothers and sisters when you think of spiritual things God's mind is higher than human mind. We were saying out here the Holy Spirit guided Paul to Europe.

Now certainly he wanted the Europeans to be saved. The saints were saved. The first convert was an Asian.

Now if he wanted to save a nation why not go to Asia? He forbade Paul to go to Asia. And yet when he led Paul into Philippi the first one saved was an Asian. How do you explain that? We cannot explain.

We cannot explain the move of the Holy Spirit. His mind is higher than our mind and his ways are higher than our ways. We can only bow and worship him because he is God.

He is God. The Father and Lady did that. He did that.

So the first convert, the first believer in the city of Philippi was Lydia and her household, Asians. Then Paul continued to attend that prayer group because he was still trying to help these women to know the Lord. And as he was going to that prayer group a slave girl possessed by an evil spirit, a diviner, followed Paul.

Every day she would follow Paul and the companions as they were going to the prayer group and she would cry out on the street and say, now these people came from God and they were telling you the salvation. As if even the devil was helping preaching the gospel. Actually the devil was trying to confuse the issue.

So after a few days Paul's spirit was disturbed. God does not need any help from the devil. And when the evil spirit seems to be helping, actually he was trying to distort, to confuse the whole issue.

So finally Paul, when he was disturbing his spirit, he turned back and in the name of the Lord Jesus cast the evil spirit out. And the slave girl was free. But her master saw that their chance of making money was lost.

Why? Because this slave girl had the spirit of Pythia or Python. Now Python is a Greek God. A Greek God, the revealer of sins.

So evidently with this evil spirit she was able to tell fortunes. She was able to reveal secrets. And through that her master got lots of profits.

And when the evil spirit was cast out, the profit was ended. May we say the second one who was delivered in the city of Philippi was a Greek. She was not a Roman.

Because Python was a Greek God. So evidently this girl was a Greek. The first one was an Asian.

The second one was a Greek. You know that that is the way of God. Now how about the third one? Then you find because of this these masters of the slaves, seeing that their profit was finished, they began to arouse, stir up the mob.

Saying that these men were Jews, they came to proclaim something that we Romans could not accept. See? A Roman colony. We were Romans.

We cannot change. Now these are Jews. They are telling something that we Romans ought not to do.

And because of that Paul and Cyrus were taken. And they were beaten. And they were put in the dungeon.

Brothers and sisters, without being questioned. Without being judged. The Roman law was supposed to be a just law.

And yet here you find Paul and Cyrus, they were beaten. And they were insulted in the dungeon. But the life of God, the life of Christ, was so ascendant in them at midnight they began to sing, to pray, and to pray.

Usually when it was dark at midnight you felt your pain more. Because everything was so quiet. There was no distraction.

But here you find the life of Christ was so ascendant in these two men. Instead of moaning and groaning and murmuring, they were singing, praying, and praying. And as they were doing that there was an earthquake.

A shake. All the doors of the jail were open. And suddenly the jailer woke up.

And he saw the doors open. He thought all the prisoners had escaped. So he was going to commit suicide.

And Paul cried out, we are all here. Now it is again very strange. If the doors of the prison were open, the prisoners surely would have taken the opportunity of escaping.

But nobody escaped. Why? They were all listening. They were all listening.

They forgot they were in prison. So the jailer came in. He saw the act of God.

And even a Roman jailer void of conscience, he fell before these two men and said, what shall I do? And they told him, believe on the Lord Jesus. You shall be saved and your house. And he took Paul.

He believed. And his house opened. He took Paul to his own home, washed their wounds, and set the table and served them.

And his whole house was full of joy. Now here you find the third one was a Roman. Why? Because all the petty officers in the Roman government usually come from the middle class of the Roman citizens.

So here you find a Roman. Now the church in Philippi was formed by God saving people out of Asia, Asian, Greek and Roman. It started out as an international.

But of course, it is not international because when all these nationals were brought into the body of Christ, they were a new creation. Neither Jews nor Gentiles. The wonder of the gospel of Jesus Christ is it reaches every nation.

Whether you are an Asian, whether you are Greek, or whether you are Roman, the gospel of Jesus Christ reaches every nation. And here you find a demonstration in the city of Philippi. The church in Philippi was made up of different nationals.

And yet, when they come together, there was neither Jews nor Gentiles. It is Christ. Look at these three men, three persons.

Lydia was a wealthy woman. She had religious background. Not only an Asian background, but Jewish background, because she might be apostolate.

Her social status was pretty high because she was a woman of wealth. But the slave girl, she had no status whatsoever. No status.

And here you'll find the Roman gather. He, she, was, he, was, probably in the middle class. So here you'll find people of different social status.

And yet God is able to save people of all status and put them together as one. Neither barbarians nor citizens. Neither born men nor freemen.

Neither Jews nor Gentiles. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision. But Christ is everything and He is in all.

Now that is the meaning of the church. And in the very beginning you'll find it is demonstrated in the church in Philippi. Not only out of different nationals but out of different social status.

But when God put them together there is no more these status. They are all one in Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters.

And dear brothers and sisters, this is what the church is. And from the very beginning of that church you'll find love is expressed in practical ways. Lydia after she believed in the Lord Jesus, immediately she started to serve.

The gaoler after she trusted the Lord, he immediately started to serve. He washed the wounds of Paul and Pilate. And served them at the temple.

And you know, the church in Philippi had a good beginning. A marvelous beginning. In other words, it started right.

And because of that you'll find this church was with Paul throughout his life. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, when many years later he wrote from the Roman prison, he said from the very first day up to now you have been in fellowship with me with the gospel. They are of one mind, one heart with Paul in the gospel.

And no wonder, Paul loved that church so much. And they loved Paul very, very much. Now that was the beginning.

We mentioned in the very beginning that in this letter to the Philippians Paul opened his heart. Now what was the occasion? Paul came to Rome as a prisoner. Even though he was allowed certain liberties.

He was allowed to live in his own rank apartment. He was allowed to receive visitors. And yet he was a prisoner in Rome.

He was not free. He was always attached to a Roman guard. Came to a Roman guard 24 hours a day.

And the church in Philippi heard about this. So they sent a man one among them, Epaphroditus. They sent Epaphroditus from Macedonia to Italy, to Rome.

Not only to bring a gift to Paul. Because Paul was in prison he must be in need. So they thought of him.

Not only they prayed with him in spirit but they ministered to him in practical ways. So they sent a gift to Paul to supply his need. But more than that.

When they sent Epaphroditus with the gift to Paul they sent Epaphroditus to Rome to serve Paul instead of them. In other words they were not able to serve Paul while he was in prison. So they sent Epaphroditus there as their representative.

Not only to bring the money there but to stay there and serve Paul as a servant. Now you see the love there. The love of the church in Philippi towards Paul.

They really loved him. They wanted to do everything they could to relieve his suffering. They even sent a person there to serve him.

And you know traveling during those days was very difficult. Not like today. You can take an airplane and in an hour or two, a few hours you are there.

But traveling in those days was very very difficult. Probably he had to travel through land and through sea. And there were all kinds of dangers.

So after Epaphroditus arrived at Rome, he was sick even almost until death. Probably because of the danger of the traveling you know. He arrived but he was so sick he almost died.

So when Paul saw the situation you know when a person was sick naturally he would be thinking of his own home right? Of his own people. So naturally Epaphroditus when he was sick, naturally he would be thinking of his people in Philippi. And Paul was such a person.

He was never one who only thought of himself. He was so considerate. He was always thinking of other people.

For himself of course. It would be nice in Philippi. Not big problem.

But some problem. And Paul used this opportunity to help them solve that problem. And lastly which is actually the most important point.

And that is they loved Paul so much. And Paul loved them so much. So Paul wanted to share his secrets with them in fullness.

And that's why we say this letter to the Philippians is so important. Because there Paul is opening his heart and tells us his secret of life. As you read the letter to the Philippians I believe you will be struck by the content in that letter.

Think of Paul's environment. He was a prisoner in Rome. And more than that an unwilling prisoner actually.

Why? Because he was forced by the Jews to appeal to Caesar. The Jews wanted to murder him. And even the Roman magistrate, the Roman government, the Roman governors were trying to please the Jews.

And Paul was forced to say I appeal to Caesar. As a Roman citizen he had the right to appeal to Caesar. In other words to be judged by Caesar himself.

But in doing that to the Jews it might look as if he was accusing his own brethren. Opposing his own brethren in the flesh. So this was something Paul was forced to do and he was most unwilling to do.

So when he arrived Rome, you remember, immediately he gathered those elders of the synagogue together and told them that he was forced to do that. It wasn't that he had anything against the Jews. Against his own brethren.

He was an unwilling prisoner. But he was forced to do that. So you know the condition of his mind, of his heart.

And while he was in Rome as a prisoner, though he was given certain liberty and yet he was attached by chain to a Roman god 24 hours a day. He was never alone. Always a Roman god was chained to with him.

And the Roman gods took turns. So the whole procuring, the whole imperial gods heard the gospel because they took turns guiding him. You know and being together they cannot help but hear him.

But from the human sense, if you have no privacy wasn't that a great suffering? Absolutely no privacy. Not only he did not have liberty but he had no privacy. And furthermore while he was in Rome, he was still able to receive visitors and preach the gospel.

But certain Jewish Christians, when they saw Paul was preaching the pure gospel of grace out of jealousy, they became very zealous to preach the gospel of the law and grace. And by doing that they were in conflict with Paul. And they added suffering to it.

Because Paul thought it was a distorted gospel. And then of course he thought of all the churches. His heart was with them.

They had their problems. And yet he could not help them personally. Because he was bound.

Brothers and sisters, when you think of all these things, you know Paul was in a very bad situation. Humanly speaking. Can you think of any situation that you might be in? Any circumstance that you may be in? Worse than Paul's situation.

Well friend, we are in a situation like that. Even less than that. What will be our reaction? What will be our manner of life? Probably we will begin to moan and groan and then murmur and even rebel.

Why God allow all these things to happen to me? I haven't done anything wrong. On the contrary, I'm serving the Lord with all my heart. And I got into all these problems and he, he doesn't, he doesn't, he doesn't relieve my problems.

Solve my problems. Allow me to be changed here. And yet you'll find in the letters to the Philippians there was such an ascendancy in spirit.

The situation was there. It hasn't changed. But Paul rose above the situation.

He did not live under. He always lived. Brothers and sisters, God does not, has not promised.

As Sister Flint wrote, God has not promised. God always believes. God has not promised that.

It's not because you are the Lord. Therefore your whole situation environment will be so rosy and smooth. There will be no problem.

There will be no difficulty. God will solve every problem immediately or without allowing any problem to come to your life. God has not promised that.

Probably your situation will get worse. Because He has delivered you out of the power of darkness and has translated you into the kingdom of the Son of God's love. So you'll find the enemy is out for you, looking for you.

But how are we going to live here on earth? What is the secret of life? How can we live above and not underneath? Paul tells us the secret. He said, for me to live is... If anybody can live by his own willpower, by his dynamic personality, by his own strength, by his own knowledge, by his own determination, that man will be Paul. Because Paul was actually a genius.

You may look at Paul from every direction and he was a genius, no doubt. No doubt a genius. Even before he was converted, when he was full of process, you'll find that he was a man of leadership.

Of leadership. Even though he was young and he had already advanced more than his contemporaries in Judaism. He was on his way up.

Way up to be THE Pharisee. He was a man with will, with power, with strength, with talent. If any man can live by his willpower, by his dynamic personality, by his strength, by his knowledge, certainly that man will be Paul.

But did he live that way? Could he live that way? You'll read Romans chapter 7 and he himself confessed that he couldn't. To will is with me, but to do is not with me. I know it.

I'm determined to do it and yet I cannot. I have tried and tried enough but until one day he said, O wretched man that I am. Who can deliver me from this body of death? It's a revelation to Paul.

You know sometimes we think of Paul in such a way. Now some people ask me this question actually. They said after Paul was converted on the road of Damascus, did he have any problem like we have? He seemed to be such a marvelous Christian.

As if after the revelation on the road of Damascus he was just going ahead victoriously and there was no defeat in his life. Not so. Not so.

You'll read Romans chapter 7. He was just like us. After we are saved, we know that we shall follow the Lord. We know we shall please the Lord.

We know we should do everything glorifying the Lord so we start out to live it. Now I'm a Christian. I'm going to live a life like Christ.

With good intention. With strong determination. I'm going to live like Christ.

Because this is what a Christian is. This is what a Christian ought to be. So we try.

We all try. Try our best. Try again and again.

Brothers and sisters, until one day we realize that to live like Christ is impossible. It is not for any man to live like Christ. There is only one man who can live like Christ and that is Christ.

Even Paul cannot live that. Now if Paul cannot live that, can you? Can you? Can I? Recently I was asked a question, but I didn't have time to answer. Somebody asked a question when I was in a conference two weeks ago.

The question was Paul had a strong will. Therefore he could be a victorious Christian. Suppose a person without such a strong will, can he overcome? As if everything depends upon our will, you know.

But Paul himself said, to will is unique but to do is not unique. It's not a matter of willpower. It's not a matter of determination.

It's not a matter of your knowledge. It's not a matter of your strength. Sooner or later you will discover that your strength, your knowledge, your willpower, your determination are not able to compete with the law of things and of God.

You cannot live like Christ. Nobody can. I think it is a great revelation.

When Paul said, Oh wretched man that I am. Will we call ourselves a wretched man? If anybody is to call you a wretched man you will argue with them. You will say, Why do you call me that? Am I not better than that? But one day Paul began to see he is a wretched man.

Brothers and sisters, before you believed in the Lord Jesus, you did not feel so wretched. You could do anything you liked, even some pleasures of sin. But after you are saved and you want to serve the Lord, you want to follow the Lord, you love the Lord, you want to please Him.

Brothers and sisters, when you try to please Him, follow Him, you begin to discover it is a very wretched life. But you are caught. If you know that beforehand probably you will cry in the first place.

You won't become a Christian in the first place. But now there is no way back. No way back.

But you know, in our spiritual life you will come to a day when you will begin to realize how wretched you are. You know, some people today feel that Christian life is just a singing life, is just a laughing life. You have to laugh all the time, you have to show a face that is round all the time.

Then you are a good Christian. Well, thank God for that. God will let you have that maybe for half a year.

But after that, probably you will begin to grow wretched. I'm afraid. Actually, when you are growing wretched, you are glowing in the Lord.

You may think you are going backwards. Why is it when I first believe in the Lord I can sing all the time? I'm so happy. But why is it I'm so wretched today? Brother and sister, you're growing.

You begin to see that for you to live and by live to you now means only one thing. It is not just to live on earth. No.

For you to live means only one thing and that is to live to the glory of God. To live like Christ. For me to live is Christ.

That is the only way. Christ is not only our purpose, our goal. He is our way.

Our way to that goal, to that purpose. We all try to live it and we become wretched. Then the revelation comes.

Oh, wretched man that I am. Who can deliver me from this body of death? And you know this verse has a background. Paul was thinking of a Roman punishment.

If a person murders another person the Roman punishment was to tie the cloth of the murderer to the murderer face to face, body to body, hands to hands, feet to feet and just tie them together and let the decayed corpse, the poison of the decayed corpse, gradually poison the living person and put him to death. That was a Roman punishment and Paul was thinking of that. Oh, wretched man that I am.

Who can deliver me from this body of death? I am tied to a cloth. I cannot get away from it. It is poisoning me.

It is corrupting me. And who is that cloth? Yourself. How can you get away from it? And brothers and sisters, it is at that point that the positive side of the revelation comes.

I am crucified with Christ. No longer live I but Christ who lives in me. And I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith. The faith of the Son of God who loves me and gave himself to me. You see, that revelation came in two parts.

One is negative and one is positive. The negative is to see, oh, wretched man that I am. I can never make it.

I better give up. And the positive side is he has already made it. I am crucified with Christ.

Who can deliver me from this wretched man? I am crucified with Christ. He has. When he was crucified on the cross, I was there.

He did it. So now, who is here? It is not I who lives. It is Christ who lives in me.

I now live in the flesh. I am still in the flesh. Living in the flesh.

That is, in this body. But it is by faith. I do not live by sight.

If I look, it may be I. But I live by faith. I am crucified with Christ. It is Christ who lives in me.

And brothers and sisters, pause it. Thank God. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In other words, for me to live is another person. God has never meant that we shall live by ourselves. God wants us to live.

But to live is not me. It is Christ. How often we try to live.

The more we try, the more wretched we are. And all the time, as if the Lord is trying to tell us, you don't need to live. You have already died.

I am living. I will live if you are only nothing. For me to live is Christ.

Not for me to live is to be like Christ. Not for me to live will be Christ. But for me to live is Christ.

God has all we need to do is to believe and to act. It is Christ. So the secret of Paul's life as a Christian, as a man of God is Christ.

His secret is not that he knows some secret formula. You know, sometimes we are always seeking for some secret formula. Especially with Chinese medicine.

It's always secret formula. We are not looking for secret formula. No.

But the secret is a living person. Christ. Christ.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is an open secret. It is yours. It is mine.

We all have this secret. The only thing is to realize that this is Christ. And if we really realize this, know that it is Christ.

Is there any wonder that Paul was able to live above his conditions? No wonder. This is natural. What else can you live? This is the only way to live.

Brothers and sisters, here you'll find Christianity is not giving us a standard and put us under law. The bondage of law. Christianity is to give us Christ as a standard as well as the way for that standard.

It is Christ. So this is Paul's secret. So I do hope that as we start with the letters to the Philippians as Paul shares himself with us that we can really get hold of that secret.

It is Christ. Can we have some praise?

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