

# THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME?

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

*WE HAVE BECOME SO ATTACHED TO THIS WORLD, WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR JOURNEY HOME TO HEAVEN.*

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# THIS WORLD IS NOT MY HOME?

## PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

I would like to remind us where we are in Paul's letter to the Philippians. Verses 1-11 contained the greetings and salutations. Verses 12-26 contain a transition between the introduction and the body of the letter. Last time we dealt with the first half of this transition. This morning we will complete it.

Keep in mind that this portion of the standard ancient letters dealt with something like, "I am doing well and hope this letter finds you the same." Last time we saw that Paul talked about the health of the gospel. In other words, the gospel was alive and well. People all over Rome were hearing the gospel and people within the palace were hearing about the gospel. The gospel was being heard in every corner of Rome .

This morning, we will see Paul get a little bit more personal as to how he is faring through all of this. You know, we all readily acknowledge that our final resting-place is heaven. However, it seems to me that we have become so enamored with this world that we have forgotten that this world is not our home. In fact, we have become very comfortable in this world. We tend to deny death. We look at death as an enemy that rips us away from this world, when in reality; we should look at death as our transportation to heaven.

I'm not sure if this guy had a right outlook on life or a wrong outlook.

An 80-year-old man came to me and asked me to do premarital counseling. I asked him who he was planning to marry. He showed me a picture of his 25-year-old bride to be. Half jokingly I said, "You know, marrying a girl that young and that hot could be fatal." The old man, without thinking said, "Well pastor, that's a chance we'll have to take. If she dies, she dies."

I'm not sure that guy had a realistic view of death. But I can certainly say that he was comfortable with this world. Paul's attitude should remind us that this world is not our home. Our real home is in heaven.

I think one of the best metaphors for describing the Christian life is that of a journey. From the moment we are born, we are on a journey. We were all headed on a lifelong journey to hell. When we gave our lives to Christ, He put us on a new road. He put us on the road to eternal life. Our home is now heaven and God will journey with us

through this life all the way home. The early Christians knew this because they faced constant persecution. The Apostle Paul knew this. He had been beaten, shipwrecked, and stoned. Now he was in jail, on trial for his life. People, who face constant hardships in life, tend to focus on their heavenly home.

The problem is that most of us have relatively easy and pleasurable lives. In fact, **WE HAVE BECOME SO ATTACHED TO THIS WORLD, THAT WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR JOURNEY HOME TO HEAVEN.**

As we study through this morning's passage, I would like us to remember that we are on a journey home. Heaven is our home. God the Father is waiting there for us. Jesus, through the power and the presence of the Holy Spirit, journeys with us and promises to guide us safely home. While journeying home, we would do well to remember that our earthly lives are mysteriously connected to our heavenly destinies.

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## I

### **HEAVEN'S INTERACTION (VS 19)**

#### ***Our Journey Through This World Is Marked By A Mysterious Interaction Between Earthly And Heavenly Realities***

Verse 19 reminds us of heaven's interaction. In other words, **OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THIS WORLD IS MARKED BY A MYSTERIOUS INTERACTION BETWEEN EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY REALITIES.** Last time we were together, I mentioned that the end of verse 18 was transitional and could be applied to what directly preceded it, namely that Paul rejoiced for the advance of the gospel, even if it were advanced by people who he disagreed with and even if it were advanced as a result of his being in jail.

Now let's apply this phrase in verse 18 to our text for today. Paul ended verse 18 by saying, *"Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,"* because of what follows here. Remember, this is a letter. There were no chapter and verse divisions. It was simply a personal letter from Paul to his friends in Philippi. Paul is rejoicing for God's salvation, for God's partnership, and for the home God has prepared for Paul in heaven. He has

good reason to rejoice.

I know that what I am about to say is probably going to offend people from both sides of the theology of the Holy Spirit issue. There have been many abuses concerning the gifts and the working of the Holy Spirit. There are wild-eyed, flashy preachers out there claiming all sorts of things about the Holy Spirit. I reject the over-hyping of the supernatural workings of God.

However, I equally reject the sterile theology of people who separate the natural from the supernatural and separate the workings of God from the workings of humans. In other words, even though there is rampant abuse as to the gifts and workings of the Holy Spirit, I affirm that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are in operation in a supernatural way, and that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world through believers.

### **A. WITH EARTHLY PRAYERS**

In the first instance we can see that Heaven interacts with earthly prayers. Look at the beginning of verse 19. Paul continually rejoices that through the partnership of the prayers of the Philippian church and through the working of God's Holy Spirit, he will remain strong and fulfill his destiny in Christ. This is truly a mystery. By the way, mystery is a good biblical word. We could define it in terms of something that seems too good to be true, nevertheless, it is true. Paul has faced many trials in getting to where he was in writing this letter. His life was constantly in danger. But here he is, making his case before the emperor's high court in Rome .

Keep in mind that this is Scripture, inspired truth by the Holy Spirit. Paul says the reason he has made it this far and will make it all the way to the end is a direct result of the Philippians' prayers on his behalf to God. Those prayers are married up with God's work. There are two possible ways to translate the second phrase, "*the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*" It could be translated in a way that describes the help given as the Holy Spirit. In other words, God helped Paul by giving him the Holy Spirit. The second way it could be translated is that God gave the Holy Spirit to Paul in order to help him. I think Paul intends both meanings here. God gave the Holy Spirit to as a help to Paul and the Holy Spirit is Paul's helper.

Secondly, the *Spirit of Jesus Christ* can likewise have two possible translations. It could read, "the Spirit of Jesus Christ," or it could mean, "the Spirit is Jesus." Again, the fullness of this translation should include both. In other words, Jesus together with God the Father, sends the Holy Spirit to live in each believer. However, it is equally clear that Jesus inhabits us through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. This is a

mystery that Paul talks about in several letters. Jesus presently inhabits earth through us while we presently inhabit heaven through Him.

So here is what is going on in Paul's life. Paul is sitting in prison, waiting to hear the verdict come down whether his preaching of Christ is legal or illegal, and whether he will be executed or set free. The church is praying for Paul to be strong and courageous. God's Holy Spirit is combining with these prayers to strengthen Paul.

## **B. WITH DELIVERANCE**

Now look at the last phrase in verse 19. Here, heaven is going to interact with Paul's earthly deliverance. The word for *deliverance* is the common New Testament word for salvation. The most common usage for salvation is the religious usage of the word. We talked about this before. Salvation is a process that embraces the past, the present, and the future. When Paul gave his life to Jesus on that road to Damascus, he was saved. There would come a time when Paul died and would be saved. He would receive salvation from Jesus. However, at the present time in Paul's life, he was in the process of being saved. So God was bringing Paul along the journey home. God was saving Paul.

Another usage of the word salvation could be translated as *vindicated* or *delivered*. In other words, the court may declare Christianity a legitimate religion and declare Paul innocent of any wrongdoing.

And finally, salvation can be related to health. In other words, no matter how things turned out, God would use it to make and mold Paul into the man He wanted him to be.

Again, we should understand the fullness of the meaning of all three. From an earthly perspective, Paul was converted on the road to Damascus. He devoted his life to preaching and teaching the gospel. He would some day receive his reward from God in heaven. However, right now, he was in a Roman prison awaiting his fate. But that earthly plane curves up to meet the heavenly plane. Paul was saved and was presently in the process of being saved as God used all these hardships to make Paul more Christ-like. God would complete the good work He started in Paul. God would complete the good work He started in the Philippians. God would mysteriously weave heaven and earth together through His people's prayers mingling with the working of the Holy Spirit. God would mysteriously work out salvation in Paul's life through the earthly circumstances he was experiencing. God will work all things for good.

Let me make this a little more personal. Every year I hear of fellow pastors who have

been caught in some sort of sexual immorality, some indiscretion, or some mishandling of money. I am certainly no more holy than my colleagues. I am certainly not smarter than they are. I am not more noble or good. Yet, I don't find myself tempted by sexual immorality, money, power or control. For some strange reason, I am not drawn to these things. I am convinced the answer is your prayers mingled together with the work of God's Holy Spirit. I am positive that there are those of you who have faithfully and diligently prayed for me and my family from the first day we arrived here. God has heard your prayers and given me a supernatural dose of His Holy Spirit. Women don't really interest me. Money doesn't really interest me. Power and control don't appeal to me. I can only explain it in terms of your faithful prayers for me.

Please, those of you who have been praying for me, please continue to pray. Those of you who have not yet prayed for me, please pray for me and my family. God works mysteriously through your work of praying and His gift of the Holy Spirit.

Let me just make one quick comment about God's filling of us and God's filling of Paul with the Holy Spirit. When Paul gave his life to Christ on that road, God the Holy Spirit came in all His fullness into Paul. When we became Christians, the Holy Spirit came into us. The fullness of the Godhead lives in us. We have all the Holy Spirit we are ever going to receive. When the Bible talks about being filled, it is describing our surrender of an area of our life. As we give up control of a particular part of our life, the Holy Spirit fills that portion. The Holy Spirit wants to fill us, empower us, and use us for God's glory. The question is whether or not we want to give Him control. It truly is mysterious how heaven interacts with our earthly journey. **OUR JOURNEY THROUGH THIS WORLD IS MARKED BY A MYSTERIOUS INTERACTION BETWEEN EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY REALITIES.**

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## II

### HEAVEN'S MISSION (VS 20-21)

***Our Mission Is To Bring Glory To God In Life And In Death***

#### A. THE EXPECTATION (20a)

Keeping in mind that heaven is our home, and our journey through this life is just that, a journey, we need to remember what heaven's mission is as described in verses 20-21.

The Apostle Paul realized that **OUR MISSION IS TO BRING GLORY TO GOD IN LIFE AND IN DEATH.** Paul lays out the expectation in the first half of verse 20. The expectation is that we will be Christ's representatives on earth. The expectation is that we will bring credit to Him and never doing anything to tarnish His reputation. The expectation of us as believers is that we faithfully represent Jesus to this lost and hurting world. When we denounce Jesus because we are afraid to evangelize people, we dishonor His Name. When we act immorally, we dishonor His Name. When we act unkindly, are nasty, judgmental, or unforgiving, we dishonor His Name. Paul and the early Christians were tempted to dishonor Jesus' Name by caving in under pressure and torture to renounce their faith. Paul's hope was that through the prayers of the Philippians and the power of God's Holy Spirit, he would bring honor to Jesus' Name.

Is that our major focus in life? Is that something we pray for, that we won't do anything that would bring dishonor to Jesus? Can you imagine being nasty to someone, and then turn around and present the gospel to someone who just witnessed your outburst? Can you imagine being sexually immoral and trying to lead people to Christ? Our prayer should be that God continually conform us to the image and nature of His Son Jesus so that we could faithfully represent Him. The expectation is simple. We are to live well. We are to die well. We are to life for Christ. We are to die for Christ.

## **B. THE GOAL (20b)**

Paul expands on the goal in the second half of verse 20. Our whole goal in life is to bring glory to God. We would all say that, but if I were to ask us what glory meant, we couldn't define it. Let's define this religious word so we can use it in the future with understanding. The word for glory in Greek is *doxa*. In everyday Greek it means reputation. Look back to verse 20. Paul says that whether by life or by death, he wants Christ to be exalted in his body. Literally the word exalted means to *make large*. In other words, Paul wants Jesus to be made large in his life. Paul wants to glorify God. Simply put, Paul wants to add to Jesus' reputation. When we live well and when we die well as Christ's ambassadors, His reputation spreads. If we live poorly and die poorly, that detracts from Jesus' reputation as well. God's glory is simply a word that describes His reputation. We glorify God when we live in a way that adds to His reputation. We have quite a responsibility to live well and die well. I know that one of the things I periodically pray for is that God take my life before I do something stupid that would bring dishonor to His Name. That's all that consumed Paul.

## **C. THE POWER (21)**

In verse 21 Paul describes the power of this type of lifestyle. For Paul, it's all about

God. Think about this with me how powerful and how dangerous Paul is. He is a prisoner chained to an elite Roman Praetorian Guard. This hardened soldier wants to have a little fun with Paul. He says, "How do you like it here in prison?" to which Paul responds, "It doesn't matter, for to me, to live is Christ."

The hardened soldier got no satisfaction so he continues, "Yea, but when the emperor passes sentence on you, you're going to die." Paul smiles at him and says, "Oh, that's even better. I'll get to go home right away." So the guard says, "No, then we'll make you live," to which Paul once again says, "That's O.K., I'll have more time to live for Christ." Finally knowing he can't win, the guard shuts up.

When we make a decision to live and die only for Christ, everything else in life becomes unimportant. It doesn't matter if our boss likes us or treats us fairly. It doesn't matter if we get our promotion or a new house or a new car. If the only thing in life that matters to us is our relationship to God, nothing can take our peace or joy away. We will learn to be content in all situations. Let's simplify it. **OUR MISSION IS TO BRING GLORY TO GOD IN LIFE AND IN DEATH.**

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### III

## HEAVEN'S WAY HOME (VS 22-26)

### *Love Is Our Guide As We Journey Home*

And just in case we have gotten off the track and have lost our way, verses 22-26 show us heaven's way home. In other words, **LOVE IS OUR GUIDE AS WE JOURNEY HOME.** We throw that word love around so casually today, it means nothing. I would venture to say that most of our acts of love are self-centered. Love in Christ is never casual. Love in Christ is never easy.

#### **A. LOVE IS A DILEMMA (22-24)**

In fact, Paul discovers that love is a dilemma in verses 22-24. Just look at the last couple sentences in verse 22 and the first sentence in verse 23. Please do not miss the emotion in it. He says, "*What shall I choose? I am torn between two choices.*" That phrase, "I am torn between two choices," is a good translation, but let me try to make it a little more literal. Paul is saying, "I have been forced into a position where I am caught between a rock and a hard place." He is emotionally torn and he is

emotionally trapped. Here are his two choices.

Option number one is driven by his incredible love for, and desire to be with, Jesus. Again, the language in verse 23 is military language. He says that he desires to depart. That word depart has to do with breaking camp and moving out. For example, an army may be on a foreign expedition. They set up camp in the field, and fight for control of a town. Once the battle is won, the command comes to break down camp, pack up the tents, and head for home. Paul feels as if he has camped out in this world long enough. He wants to break camp, and move home to heaven with his Lord Jesus Christ. He would prefer that the emperor execute him. That would be better for Paul.

However, option number two would be better for the people in the Philippian church. They needed to see Paul vindicated and miraculously delivered. That would bolster their faith. Paul had much more to teach them. Paul's love for the Philippians created a dilemma. He wanted to die and go to heaven. However, he knew that the Philippians needed him and that God was sending him. Emotionally Paul had to choose between self-love and love for God and the Philippians.

## **B. LOVE IS A CHOICE (25)**

Verse 25 clearly paints the picture that true love is a choice. I don't know how Paul comes by this conviction. Perhaps he got advanced word of a not-guilty verdict. Perhaps the Holy Spirit revealed to him this information. I don't know. But it seems as if Paul is certain that he will be set free and that he will gladly accept that because he will subordinate the love he has for himself to the love he has for God and the Philippians. And again, I'm amazed how many military terms he uses. Perhaps because he knows the Roman guard listening in may understand it better. He is going to partner with the Philippian church for their progress and joy in the faith. That word progress means to remove obstacles and move forward. Paul will partner with the Philippians as they move forward in their faith and in their mission to spread the gospel.

We need to continually partner with one another. The Christian community is built on sacrificial love. There is no room for self-centeredness or self-absorption. There is no room for a desire to control. There is no room for selfish ambition or self-importance.

There is only room for sacrificial love that prays for one another. There is only room for praying for one another's strength and salvation. There is only room for humble, loving service.

## **C. LOVE IS A TESTIMONY (26)**

Because as verse 26 points out, love is a testimony. The NIV translates this verse mildly. Let me try to capture the intensity. It says something like, "so that your boasting in Jesus can be intensified because of me through my coming." In other words, Paul has been part of the Philippians ministry. He has taught them, spent time with them, and continues to communicate with them. The Philippians have partnered with Paul in his ministry by supporting him with money, caring for his needs, and praying for him. Paul is a prisoner of the greatest power on earth, the Roman Empire . The Philippians are partnering with him and God by praying. God is mingling their prayers with the Holy Spirit. When Paul is once again standing in Lydia's house in the city of Philippi, it will be a demonstration of their love for one another, God's love for them, their love for God, and the Power of God as He works in His people.

I never cease to be amazed how God has put such a diverse group of people together as we are here at Devon Church . I never cease to be amazed at how you care for one another and how you care for me. When people come and see our church, it is a testimony to the working of God's Holy Spirit. As we take so many different ethnic, racial, and economic backgrounds and grow in unity in our love for God and for one another, we bring glory to God. Let us never grow weary in this. Let us live and die for God's glory. Let us spread His reputation in this neighborhood and in our circles of influence. **LOVE TRULY IS OUR GUIDE AS WE JOURNEY HOME.**

And let us never forget that this world is not our home. We are strangers here on earth. Our home and our rewards are in heaven where Jesus now watches over them. We must be careful of getting too comfortable in this world.

**WE HAVE BECOME SO ATTACHED TO THIS WORLD THAT WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THAT THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY IS THE EXPERIENCE OF OUR JOURNEY HOME TO HEAVEN.**

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## IV

### EPILOGUE

It seems as if all of the great missionaries throughout history never forgot that. They were always focused on going home to be with the Lord.

Amy Carmichael was an Irish Presbyterian who gave her life to missions at a very young age. She served in Japan , China , Ceylon , and finally in India where she established

homes for children. Even though life wasn't easy, she still enjoyed serving God.

However, she never forgot where she wanted to be. She realized that her whole life was a journey home to be with her Lord in heaven. And through it all, she never lost her sense of humor.

During her illness a friend visited her. The friend was sharing some of her own physical ailments with Amy. She said, "The doctor warned me, 'Don't ever bend over suddenly, or you might die on the spot.'"

Amy, with a twinkle in her eye responded, "However do you resist the temptation?"

Amy Carmichael knew this world was not her home. The Apostle Paul knew he was just passing through on his way home. How about us? Have we become so attached to this world, that we are no longer interested in our heavenly home? I hope not, because we will never find the peace and joy that God wants us to have. We find peace and joy by dying to this world.