Philippians 1:20-25 (Walter Thomas Turpin) 52882

Christian Truth: Volume 17, My Earnest Expectation (1:20-25)

"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. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." Phil. 1:20-25.

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." Phil. 3:17-21.

May I say just one word about this question of the body, in reference to the place that it was intended of God to fill, as the vessel for the display of Christ's power, at this present moment?

I would inquire, How far are we intelligently with God in the actings of His grace through our bodies now, and the place that they will have in the day when we shall have nothing to say to them, but they will be changed and made like unto His glorious body? He will show us in that day how He can change and fashion them; but in this day I think we do not give sufficient weight to the fact that it is in our body God intends that Christ should now be magnified. We constantly are prone to think that it is only in our minds, our souls, our affections, or what does not show outside, that Christ's power is to be seen; but that is not at all what we have here.

There is only one other place in the New Testament, as far as I know, where the word here used occurs, and that is in Rom. 8:19. "Earnest expectation." It means, literally, that the thing longed for keeps up expectation until the time is exhausted. T h e thought is, that but one distinct thing is before the soul, and after that I eagerly stretch out my neck. And what is that? That Christ—all that He is—excellency, fullness, blessedness—should come out in my body; not that it should come out in my spirit, but that this body and all that relates to it, and in connection with it, and every circumstance and scene that it belongs to, should be the platform on which Christ should be expressed, in life or death. As has been said, Stephen was the expression of the one, and Paul of the other, because Paul lived on here in this world after he had seen that blessed One in the glory; and everything here was distanced by that sight.

The body is that in which all the malignity of Satan has been displayed; it bears the marks of it. Where does all the sickness an d weariness around us come from? It came in consequence of sin, and it is expressed in the body. In Mark 5 the Lord meets a man possessed of the devil; all the malignity of Satan was expressed in his condition; but he is made an instance of the delivering power of Christ, and his body becomes the vessel for its display—wonderful deliverer! The result, then, of this deliverance on him was, that the One who had cleared everything out of the way now filled the whole scene with Himself, and therefore the effect on the man was that he wanted to be with Him. This desire is the simplest and first principle in a soul that has found distinct deliverance in the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to be with the One to whom I owe everything. The Apostle says, I have "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ." There was not a single thing now detaining him here. There is no doubt that he was once detained. Jerusalem detained him at one time, but it was not so now. If even the interests of Christ, and the things of Christ, come in to take the place that Christ Himself should have in the heart, we are not clear to go to Him. I believe many a saint is detained here by the things of Christ, rather than attracted to Himself.

I do not think the coming of the Lord tests us half as much as this: Am I ready to go to Him now at this moment? Of course it is a blessed hope, the looking forward to our being all called up together; but it is an immensely testing thing whether or not I am able to say, There is not a single thing that keeps me back here; I do desire to depart and be with Christ. We are really only qualified to stay when we are ready to depart. Then Christ is before me, and I am possessed by Christ.

It is a wonderful thought that just as that man had been possessed by Satan-the scene of his mischief and confusion being his poor body- so now he was possessed by Christ. All that Christ is comes out in my body, whether I live or die. There was the intelligent communion of the man's heart in it. I see he is a man who has got intelligence with the mind and thought of God in that which was once the vessel in which Satan displayed his malignity and dislike to Christ.

Ought not I to be exercised as to what my body is witnessing to? I do not think the saints are exercised enough as to this. Just as an illustration, before I pass on, I would mention what might be seen—a poor, weak, feeble creature, tossing to and fro on a bed of pain, and such a one saying, "What use am I? a trial to myself, a tax to others, no good to anybody." Why, that poor sufferer, with a body full of pain, with everything that would go to make him just the contrary of this by nature, may, by the power of Christ, be so in communion with Him, that his body, instead of being full of murmurings and discontent, is filled with peace and joy, controlled by His presence, and satisfied with Himself. And as you look you do not say, What a wonderful creature is there; but, What a Christ is that which can be shown out in such a poor, weak house of clay as this is.

Every break in the vessel only brings out in it the more the preciousness of the treasure that is inside; every crack and chink only lets it shine out the more brightly. Paul was not expecting to see the sun go down in ease and retirement; he was looking for martyrdom.

The Lord give us to see the place that our bodies have. As I have said, it is not our hearts, or minds, or feelings, that are in question; it is the earthly tabernacle, or tent, this body in which He is to be magnified.

And now one word on the third chapter. It is a wonderful thing, and a most sanctifying thing, too, the thought that God has got, in His own presence in glory, the pattern of what He is going to have all His people like. God is working with us morally in different ways, that no one but Christ should be seen in us even now. It is Christ that is filling His eyes and affections always. There is a day coming when He will take these very bodies—which have been the witnesses of Him in their humiliation in this scene of the terrible hatred of Satan against Christ, and the witnesses, too, of the ruin of the first man- He will take them and transform them into the likeness of His own. Not only will He do that by-and-by, but meanwhile He would like to have you and me intelligently entering into His thought about it—our necks eagerly stretched out after one object—that we might be magnifying Him.

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