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"An Honorable Life In Christ"

THE CHRISTIAN WALK



MAGAZINE

SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS TO FAN THE INNER-FLAME OF LIVING FOR CHRIST

CONTENTS

"...be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."
-Colossians 1:9-10



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EDITORIAL PAGE



Hello everyone,

Welcome to October's issue of *The Christian Walk Magazine*.

Our theme for this issue is, "An Honorable Life In Christ." Being in fellowship with God is an eternal honor—surpassing all historical bonds of fellowship. But, while we temporarily live out our lives on earth, how can we best devote our limited time here bringing honor to God? This will be the focus of the articles contained within this month's issue.

We hope not only to inspire you to consider more frequently how you (by the knowledge of God's revealed will) can live your life bringing honor to God, but also how you might inspire others to do so.

Let's face it, the fundamental way to honor God is to simply obey Him. In your reading of these articles, you may discover that it is not your failure to *desire* obedience to God, but perhaps a lack of deep self-discipline to consistently do so. You're not alone, many struggle with this on a weekly basis. It our prayer that these articles will awaken within you, a fresh new resolve to serve God honorably, and consistently.

Do we practice our Faith based upon habit, emotionless submission? Or, do we have a deep and sincere appreciation for God's favor, an appreciation that fuels us to embrace the duty and privilege of living to honor Him?

May God stir us all to examine ourselves, and in doing so, may we summon up enough strength to act upon our commitments to Him.

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KEY SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 1:20

WORTHY OF HONOR

"Paul's past, present, and future life he so honored Jesus in his body by picking up the same mission Jesus had, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10). Paul centers his life around this same mission. If we seek to honor Christ in our body, let us be about seeking and saving the lost."

From the context of Philippians 1:20, how was Jesus honored in Paul's body? There are specifically several things, "...but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. (Phil. 1:20 ESV). Paul used the word "now" showing that presently Paul was honoring Christ.

Then Paul pointed to the future by saying by "life or by death" and had some more things to say about his future. But earlier in this chapter, Paul pointed out some key things in his past that also honored Christ. Paul honored Christ in his body, in the past, now, and in the future.



In about 10 years Paul was done preaching in these 4 Roman Provinces.

1. PAUL'S PAST HONORABLE LIFE

"Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" (Phil. 1:12). Paul had been in prison for two years at Caesarea (Acts 24:27) and up to two more years in Rome (Acts 28:30). At least 4 years of imprisonment. Why? Because Paul was so effective with the preaching of the gospel he had enemies who imprisoned him. How successful was Paul in preaching the gospel? "In little more than ten years St. Paul established the Church in four provinces of the Empire, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia," wrote Roland Allen in his book: "Missionary Methods, " (chapter 1). To such a degree Paul could say, "so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ... with no further place for me in these regions." (Rom. 15:19,23). Because Paul was so effective for the cause of Christ, the Jews attacked him in the temple and arrested him. Then when the brethren found out Paul was in prison, this caused others to "have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear" (Phil. 1:14). Christ was certainly honored in Paul's past efforts with the gospel, except in the event of Stephen's death.

2. PAUL IS PRESENTLY HONORING CHRIST IN HIS BODY. "... with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body," (Phil 1:20). Paul is not guessing (**Continued on page 5**)

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Christ is honored, nor is it that he has a hunch, but rather “with full courage”. Why is he so confident now? First of all, he has a clean conscience with every accusation the Jews make against him, “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men. (Acts 24:16 & 23:1). Secondly, Paul is suffering for Jesus, “...also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.” (Phil. 1:29-30 NAU).

3. PAUL’S FUTURE WILL HONOR CHRIST IN HIS BODY.

He is planning on having some “fruitful labor” (Phil 1:22). This will bring glory to Christ. He continued looking to his future when he said, “I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith” (Phil. 1:25). Paul planned to help Christians all over the empire to make this progress in their faith. He will nurture the faith of a runaway slave-turned disciple, named Onesimus, and send him back to his master Philemon (Book of Philemon). Paul will write Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians while in the first Roman imprisonment. He will write Titus and 1 Timothy when he gets out. Then in the second Roman imprisonment, he will write 2 Timothy. Paul felt, “the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28). When Paul got out of the first imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:16), he took a trip to Crete. There he left Titus to finish the mission (Titus 1:5, 3:12). He also dropped Timothy off at Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3) and continued to the churches in Macedonia. He let someone else borrow his parchments (probably copies of the scriptures) and a cloak, “when you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments” (2 Tim. 4:13).

So from Paul’s past, present, and future life he so honored Jesus in his body by picking up the same mission Jesus had, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10). Paul centers his life around this same mission. If we seek to honor Christ in our body, let us be about seeking and saving the lost.

What does the lost soul need--but an examination of the life of Christ. “Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers” (Luke 2:46-47). Now I don’t know what impresses me more about the honorable Jesus from this passage. So let me ask you. Are you game? Then amuse me, and take your pencil out and circle the attribute that is most honorable about Jesus.

1. A 12 year old boy can answer the teachers' questions in the Temple to such a degree that it caused them to be “amazed.”
2. A 12 year old boy who has three days off from his parents, is not playing football or soccer in the streets with the other Jerusalem boys but found in church. Not only in church but an active participant, the one place where he shines. **(Continued on page 6)**

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3. A 12 year old boy who is aware enough that he considers God his father.
4. A 12 year old boy who puts God's will over his own, doing his father's business.
5. A 12 year old boy nearing his teenage years, continues "in subjection" to his parents who are not as dedicated to God as he is now.
6. A 12 year old boy who is not content with his own understanding of God, people, and the scriptures but made choices so that he "kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men (Luke. 2:52).

I don't know what you find as most honorable about Jesus, but I would circle number six if I had to make a choice. It's not that I don't think the first 5 are outstanding, they are indeed, but Jesus, this 12 year old, is not satisfied at this level, but keeps making even better choices. He keeps winning the father's heart and mine, eventually. I say that because I was not converted until I was 18, just before graduating high school. My family didn't go to church. God was brand new. And although I was dedicated to the Scriptures and going to church, there were some things in my life that should not be considered "honorable". Yet Jesus did not give up on me. Jesus is still waiting for me to become 12 years old. Though I am 58 years old, I have not attained to his 12 years, let alone what he did thereafter.

So if you still have that pencil out, and after you have circled number 6, there is one more thing I want you to do. Consider this passage from Philippians one more (**Continued on page 7**)

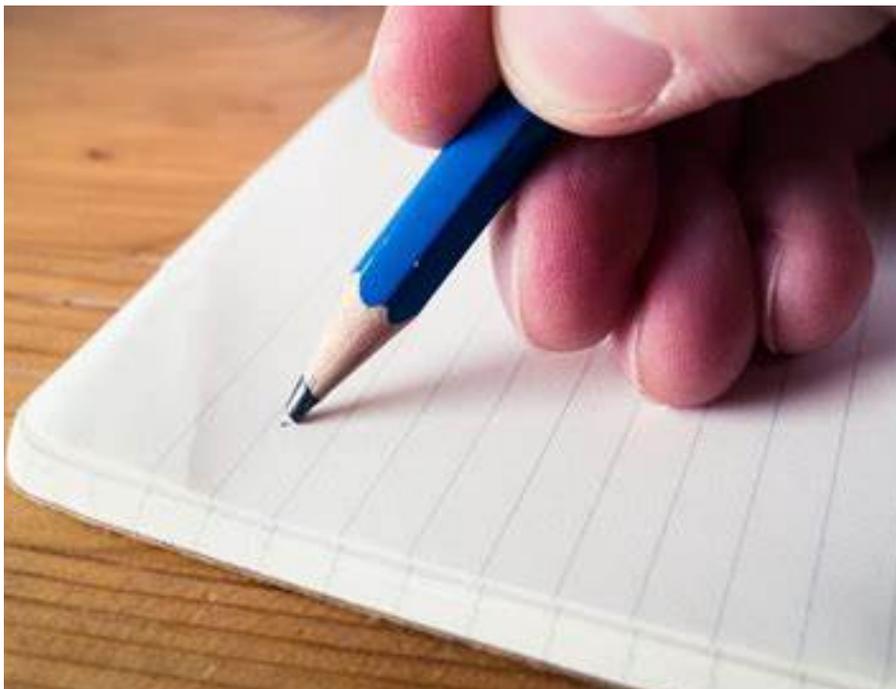
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time, "as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:20-21 ESV).

Paul is confident that he will not be ashamed, and I take that in relationship between him and Christ. No shame before the spirit of Jesus. There is nothing in Paul's life that he is ashamed of now. This present "without shame" view of himself, does not guarantee that he isn't overlooking something, I'm sure you remember the road to Damascus event of Acts 9. Jesus himself seems to have an even greater awareness, conscientiousness, of himself and God. Paul wanted this too, now me too.

So with a pencil in hand, circle this, "I will not again behave in such a way that would shame Jesus; I will choose all things that honor him."

Jesus is my first. He showed me that I came first in his life. In some ways, it even looks like the Father put me first before Jesus by having Jesus scourged and crucified in my place. How can this be? Why would the Father do this? The Father allowed his only Son to suffer without hesitation (Rom. 8: 32) and Jesus denied his own will to do the Father's. Now it's my turn. I have some catching up to do.



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KEY SCRIPTURE: JAMES 2:7.

LIVING UP TO THAT HONORABLE NAME THROUGH WHICH GOD CALLED US

"The honor of being a Christian lies not in simply wearing the name of Jesus, but is experienced in deep and constant fellowship with the Lord."

In his letter to Jewish disciples abroad, James exposes the hypocrisy of making a claim to Christianity while practicing partiality (**Jam** 2:1-13). He condemns some of them for showing contempt for the less fortunate of their community while at the same time showing favorable hospitality toward the powerfully-corrupt and harsh of their society! (**Jam** 2:6). James says, "Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?" While there is certainly a case to be made for the principles taught in **Luke** 6:27-31 and **Romans** 12:19-20, the intentions of the brethren in James 2, were not consistent with these principles.

Their behavior should've been a reflection of an honorable life in Christ. Sadly, it was not. On the contrary, they *dishonored* the poor (2:6) and gave undeserved honor to those who treated the honorable name of Christ with vituperation. You see, the honor of being a Christian lies not in simply wearing the name of Jesus, but is experienced in deep and constant fellowship with the Lord. And, fellowship with God demands living and conducting our lives in such a way that honors Him, and His values (consider **1 Jn** 1:3-10).

Heaven calls us through the honorable name of Jesus Christ (**Jam** 2:6), and through that call, we have the privilege and responsibility of putting on Christ and living like Christ. Apart from the grace of God (which is extended through Christ), we can do nothing that brings honor to God (consider **Jn** 15:1-5). It's a wonderful privilege that God makes us worthy to honor Him! And Jesus is our perfect model for this privilege... for, in all of His power and greatness, He was worthy of being honored by men. Yet, He did not seek or demand this (**Php** 2:5-6). Instead, In His life, ministry, and conduct, He sought to bring honor to God (**Jn** 8:48-50). As Jesus lived a life of honoring the Father, the Father honored Him in return (**Jn** 8:54). **(Continued on page 9)**



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Living In Honor

How can followers of Jesus live with honor when their teacher was eventually humiliated and killed in shame? Have you ever felt so proud of someone's efforts, that you couldn't resist telling everyone you came in contact with about them? Many in the first century were challenged to have this same enthusiasm for the condemned and crucified Nazarene.

We are called to do the same today! Paul was very bold in taking confidence in making his boast in the wretched cross (**Gal 6:14**). This presented a demanding challenge for anyone living during this time period for several reasons, here are just a few...

- It was an unthinkable thing to do (**1 Cor 1:22-23**).
- Crucifixion was only reserved for the worst of criminals.
- Crucifixion brought dishonor and shame to the public and one's family.

The cross represented the pinnacle of dreaded circumstances. Yet, during His ministry, Jesus often used the cross as a rallying cry for discipleship (**Luke 9:23**). Jesus didn't use the cross as a means to invite a life of shame, but one of honor. But how? Paul explains this in detail in his letter to the Saints at Corinth (see **1 Cor 1:18-31**). Paul makes the point that God, in His superior power and wisdom, took something shameful and used it to bring about something honorable! Thus, boasting in the events of Calvary becomes appropriate for every occasion in the life of every Christian (consider **1 Thes 5:18; Col 3:17**).



Living To Honor

So, how do disciples use their lives to bring honor to God? This begins by basing our life's walk on the solid foundation of the obedience of Faith (**Rom 1:5-6; 16:25-26**). Those who become God's righteous ones are expected to live this way (**Rom 1:16-17**). The overwhelming joy, love, and gratitude Christians have for God's amazing mercy, compels them to live lives grounded in unwavering trust and service to God (**Rom 12:1**). Acknowledging that our bodies are surrendered to function for God's will, we make it our aim to bring honor to Him through our bodies (**1 Cor 6:13, 19-20**). **(Continued on page 10)**

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Honoring God

The path to honoring God does not begin with human motives or power. One cannot assume or presume to think he can sufficiently honor God without genuine heavenly guidance. This has always been true (**Gen** 4:1-6; **Deu** 18:20; **1 Sam** 13:1-14; **Rom** 10:1-3).

The stinging words of Samuel reveal an enduring value of God: Obedience is king!

“Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry.” (**1 Sam** 15:22–23, ESV)

We honor God when we through faith, embrace His values, and obediently live out His purpose and will for us in Christ. And just like Jesus (**Jn** 8:54), when we do this, we’ll receive the privilege of being honored by God (**Rom** 2:6-10).

An Enduring Honor

We must develop and maintain an enduring life of honor. This is especially true today! Currently, we live in dishonorable times: We no longer expect or demand our leaders to be truthful. We no longer expect our leaders to operate by the rules. Our expectations of universal morality have sunk so low, we now are accepting of personal behavior from our leaders that would be unacceptable for our children, our employees, our students, (and being a former Army soldier myself), our military. The burden of responsibility falls upon us as disciples of Christ, to be examples to others, to courageously teach and display God’s concept of honorable living (**Titus** 2:1-15; 3:1-2). And in this duty, we can bring honor to God by winning over the souls of those who live without heavenly honor (**Jn** 15:8).

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KEY SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

HONOR IN BEING MORALLY EXCELLENT & PRAISEWORTHY

"Our desire must be to continue in the paths of purity in all things, and be those who continually teach the moral excellence and praiseworthiness of such ways of living.."

The Apostle Paul writes in Philippians 4:8,9, "Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable — if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy — dwell on these things. Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you." (Christian Standard Bible). As Paul writes to brothers and sisters who are under some degree of persecution within the extremely loyal Roman city of Philippi, he implores them to be a people who are living morally excellent and praiseworthy lives. They could accomplish this high standard by dwelling upon those things that were true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable. They would also be aided in these endeavors by gaining encouragement from the example that had already been set by the Apostle Paul while he was with them originally (Acts 16:11-40).

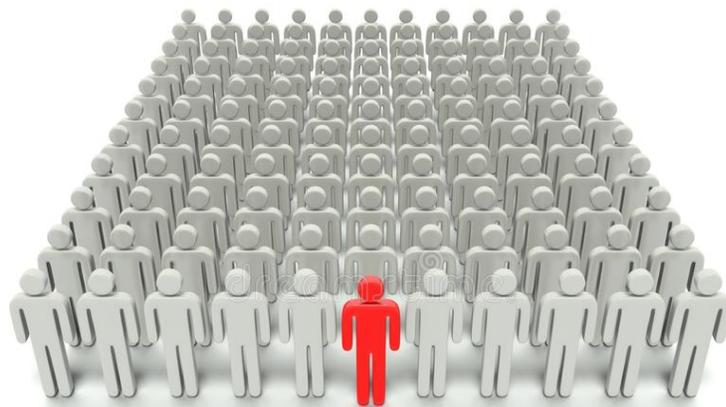
While we might see these morally excellent and praiseworthy characteristics as being the obviously superior way to live, we must recognize that such characteristics were not upheld by all within the city of Philippi. Throughout the Roman Empire cult worship and practices were common. Sexual immorality in association with these cult practices was commonplace. The mistreatment of the poor, neglected, and disabled was pervasive. It was thought of as being nothing for a newborn infant to simply be discarded if he or she was born with a physical defect. Roman culture was steeped in self-perseverance and self-promotion. It was not thought of as being out of the ordinary for false witness, lies, and hearsay to be used against one's political opponent in order to gain an advantage over them. This can even be seen in historical research into the inner workings of highest offices within the Roman empire, and it shouldn't surprise us that such was also common at the more localized levels.

For disciples to be called to be sexually pure, to care for the more vulnerable, to be selfless, and to be honest would have put them in a very awkward position in relation to the rest of society. It would be extremely difficult for a disciple of Jesus living in this manner to find himself or herself in any sort of position of importance in such a depraved society and culture. Those who valued their Roman citizenship would have very tough choices to make. **(Continued on page 12)**

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Would they choose to conform to society and keep running in that rat race of Roman life and culture? Or would they live against society and risk being ostracized? These were real choices that had to be made by our brothers and sisters who lived in Philippi in the first century, and if we're being honest we will have to admit that these choices remain for us, at least to some degree, in 21st century America.

We live in an ever-increasingly secular and humanistic society that seeks to draw people away from the traditional Judeo-Christian values that have been the foundation of our society for centuries. Values that promote decency such as being true, honorable, and so on are now seen as not being necessary for society because they hinder many desired practices from being carried out. Abortion, homosexuality, mob rule/ violence, manipulation of truth and many other practices are not compatible with the traditional Judeo-Christian values, and thus the value system is in need of changing in the minds of secular humanists. We might think that this is a level of depravity that men have not stooped to in prior generations, but let's remember that this is the same world that our Philippian brothers and sisters lived in. Just as they were called to dwell upon values that were morally excellent and praiseworthy, so must we be striving to do the same.



As various flavors of sexual immorality are being pushed as proper and in need of acceptance, we must be the people who not only run away from practicing such things, but we must also be the people who stand up and speak against such ungodliness (Romans 1:32). Fornication and adultery were once seen as practices that were disgraceful to speak of, but now we live in a society where people are flaunting their sexual exploits. Homosexuality is on its way to widespread acceptance in our society. Transgenderism has had a strong push as of late, and even pedophilia has gained some voices of support. Our desire must be to continue in the paths of purity in all things, and be those who continually teach the moral excellence and praiseworthiness of such ways of living.

I have recently been on the road traveling, and one thing that I have noticed in my first visit to some of these places is just how poor off so many people are. Homelessness has been rampant in some of these cities, and these people are often seen as expendable. How do we view them? We are very quick to speak up for the rights of the unborn as the image **(Continued on page 13)**

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bearers of God (which they most certainly are), but are we willing to speak up as “womb to tomb” pro-lifers by also advocating for the poor and destitute? If we are not willing to be consistent in this way then we shouldn’t be surprised when people call us on our inconsistency. Our culture would love to simply leave behind those who are vulnerable, but the lovely and commendable way of life will lead us to stand up for all of those who are helpless and vulnerable. This must be our goal if for no other reason than the fact that God sent His Son to serve us in our most helpless and vulnerable state (Romans 5:5-11). If we are going to be the people of God then this must be our morally excellent and praiseworthy way of living.



I wish I could say the telling of falsehoods and twisting of truth was reserved only for the political season, but the reality is we live in a world where the truth is believed to be whatever you want it to be. Far too many people live by the “by all means necessary” mantra when it comes to getting what they want and rising to any position they want to be in. There is no such thing as objective truth for many and honor is thrown out the window when integrity is neglected. Are we going

to simply go along with society when truth is abandoned and honor is discarded? Will we be those who stand by the truth regardless of how unpopular we might be? Are we willing to throw away blind allegiance and be honest when “our side” is wrong in one way or another? If we are a people who desire to live true, honorable, and just lives then we must be **(Continued on page 14)**

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willing to hold to the truth no matter the consequences. We cannot claim to serve the God of truth (John 17:17) if we are not willing to live by the truth and be morally excellent and praiseworthy.

Now, you might be thinking this is a hard ask because this means that we will be completely countering the culture that is all around us in so many ways. I understand and acknowledge this is the case. However, I also believe it is important to recognize Paul's strong words to the Philippians concerning his desires for the type of lives they were to live.



“For I have often told you, and now say again with tears, that many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction; their god is their stomach; their glory is in their shame. They are focused on earthly things, but our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humble condition into the likeness of his glorious body, by the power that enables him to subject everything to himself.” (Philippians 3:18-21)

Our Philippian brothers and sisters were surrounded, as we are, by those who could only be described as enemies of the cross of Christ. They were completely focused on earthly things which would only lead to their destruction. Conversely, Paul expected for God's people to live differently because their focus was to be on that which mattered most...their heavenly citizenship. Our minds must continually be focused on the fact that we are a part of a kingdom that will never fall. **(Continued on page 15)**

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Our country is being torn apart by those who seek to destroy the value system that has made it what it has been in the past. Perfect, no, but the goals and desired outcomes far and away supersede what so many other places on this planet offer. It has been such because people recognized the goodness of Judeo-Christian principles, but many now reject them and the chaos that has ensued should have only been expected.



This reality has caused many disciples of Jesus to become consumed with saving the culture and society through means other than the Gospel. Let me speak plainly that such endeavors are futile because men have always led themselves down pathways to destruction when they have relied upon their own wisdom. This is why it is of the utmost importance for God's people to remember that our efforts ought not to be primarily on saving a culture, society, or nation. Our goal must first and foremost be to save souls. If we can share the good news of Jesus and show our lives as examples of moral excellence and praiseworthiness then I am confident that the societal and cultural problems will work themselves out one way or another. The end results truly matter little because one day all of the kingdoms of men will fall, and the only kingdom left standing will be that of Jesus. I want to live an honorable life of moral excellence and praiseworthiness because those traits belong to my King, and He will never let me down. Will you join me in these efforts to remember where our citizenship truly lies and the great responsibilities that come with it? If you will, then may God bless us to live honorably through moral excellence and praiseworthiness even if the society around us knows of no such thing.

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KEY SCRIPTURE: 1 PETER 3:15

I'M AFRAID, BUT... I HOPE: BEHAVING HONORABLY DURING A PANDEMIC

"I hope that Christians will act, talk, and carry themselves honorably. Christians have a different hope than the rest of the world. We have nothing to fear."

This has been a year unlike the world has ever experienced. For the first time in modern American history, many church buildings across the will remain empty. There will not be any songs sung or prayers given. This virus will cause changes across America. I am afraid there will be changes away from who we should be as Christians, but I hope we will change into the people we should be.



Ephesians 6:10-12 talks about the spiritual fight that is going on right now in every one of our lives. We have the devil on one side fighting to control our lives and turn us against God, and on the other side, we have the power of God's grace supplying us with the power and tools necessary to remain true to him (Ephesians 3:14-20; 1 Peter 5:9-10). Everything that happens in our lives, each side will try to use that to their advantage. This pandemic will be no different.

I am afraid the devil will try to have us turn on each other. He would have us fight with one another and sow discord and dissension in our ranks. There has been evidence of his work already. Some Christians are arguing whether to have worship service or not. Each side thinks that what they did was right and the other side was wrong. There have been comments like "I can't believe you don't trust God" or "Why do you not care about your elderly?" or "I am glad my church still follows what the Bible says." These comments do nothing but drive us apart and divide us.

But... I hope that instead of criticizing each other, we take this opportunity to appreciate the organization that Christ built for the church. Armed with New Testament authority, each individual church must do what is best for themselves. If some churches decide to meet in person, they can, and if some decide to close, and meet online, they can.

Being an elder constantly placing one in incredibly challenging positions. It opens you up to all kinds of criticism. I hope we will not be critical but understand that these men have hard decisions to make and that they make them with the wellbeing of the congregation in mind. I hope we appreciate the gift we have. For the past several years, I cannot remember a Sunday in which I did not meet with Christians to uplift and encourage them. However, **(Continued on page 17)**

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that is not the case with some Christians in the world. I hope we appreciate the gift we have in being able to assemble together every week, whether it be in person or virtually.

I am afraid that the enemy will use this time to strike those who are weak while they are away from their spiritual family. I am afraid that when we start meeting together, normally again, that there will be fewer of us, not because some became physically sick but because they became spiritually sick. They got out of the habit of meeting with God's people. They enjoyed sleeping in on Sunday mornings and became spiritually apathetic.



But... I hope that Christians will use this time to strengthen bonds. When there is one of our number in need, that there is a brother or sister ready to meet that need (Romans 12:9-10, 13). I hope we see young Christian men and women going grocery shopping for older Christians that cannot get out. I hope that every Christian will check on the other and there would be none left out. I hope that those in the world can see the Christian love we have for one another and want to be a part of our family (John 13:35).

I am afraid that Christians will become overly fearful, and that we will look no different than the rest of the world. That no one would be able to see the hope that is in us. I am afraid that all people would only hear us pronounce is fear and dread. **(Continued on page 18)**

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But... I hope that the peace that passes all understanding will shine through (Philippians 4:7). I hope that Christians will act, talk, and carry themselves honorably. Christians have a different hope than the rest of the world (1 Peter 3:15). We have nothing to fear (Romans 8:31-39). While we are on this earth, we can serve God and others the best we can, but if it is our time to die, we get to be in heaven with the Lord forever (Philippians 1:20-24). I hope every Christian will take every precaution they can and be wise, but we have no reason to live in fear when we have such great hope and peace from the Lord. I hope we will use this time to let our light shine to the world, and through this, others will see Christ in us. I'm afraid the Devil will use this virus to sow evil among the Saints, but I hope that God and his people will use it for good—As a means to display honorable Christ-like living.

I will leave you with these words from C. S. Lewis. His words—written 72 years ago, ring with some relevance for us. Just replace “atomic bomb” with “coronavirus.”

“In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. ‘How are we to live in an atomic age?’ I am tempted to reply: ‘Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents.

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds.”

— “On Living in an Atomic Age” (1948) in Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays

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KEY SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:58

STANDING FIRM IN THE FAITH

"When all has been said, if our heart and our mind are in the right place, it will be God's glory that we seek and not our own."

Paul's epistle to the brethren at Philippi is one of the most encouraging and uplifting epistles that we have from the inspired apostle! It is from this letter that we get uplifting passages such as:

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. – Philippians 4:11-13.

As well as,

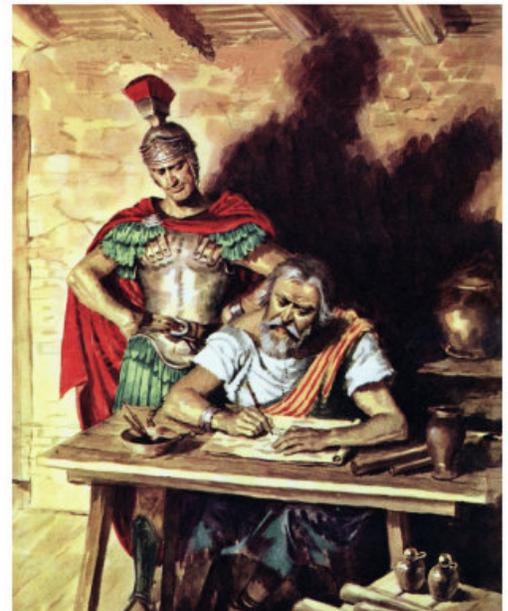
Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:4-7.

The Philippian letter is so encouraging, that I have to continue to remind myself that Paul is writing this letter while imprisoned in Rome waiting to stand trial for his life, before Nero, one of the craziest narcissistic rulers ever.

The Word of God is Not Imprisoned

Even though Paul was imprisoned, he realized and firmly believed, that the preaching of the gospel would not, in any way, be hindered by his imprisonment.

Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descendant of David, according to my gospel, for which I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal; but the word of God is not imprisoned. – 2 Timothy 2:8-9



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Thinking to Cause Me Distress

Paul's imprisonment actually resulted in the brethren having, "Far more courage to speak the word of God without fear." (Phil 1:14) Paul goes on to state, "Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice." – Philippians 1:15-18.

Paul stated that there were those of his own brethren that sought to cause him, "Distress in my imprisonment." It is difficult to try and grasp that there were Christians that wanted to cause Paul distress! No doubt, this stemmed from their jealousy of Paul. Paul wrote Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:3-10 of those brethren that had a "Morbidity interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife...and constant friction." He accuses these men of using godliness for personal gain. Yet, Paul was able to rise above it all, *Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance*



through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. – Philippians 1:19-20

Yes, it is hurtful when people say mean things about us. It is especially hurtful when those people ARE OUR OWN BRETHERN! Yet our savior calls us to rise above the insults.

Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. – John 15:20.

Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. – Matthew 5:11-12.

All Who Live Godly Will be Persecuted

Insults and lies are going to come, they are a fact of life for those that take up the cross of Christ, Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be **(Continued on page 21)**

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persecuted. - 2 Timothy 3:12.

If we are seeking the approval of men, insults and lies can do us great harm. On the other hand, if our primary ambition in life is to be pleasing to God, our shield of faith will quench the fiery arrows of strife and discourse!



Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. – 2 Corinthians 5:9.

When all has been said, if our heart and our mind are in the right place, it will be God's glory that we seek and not our own, Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name. – 1 Timothy 4:12-16.

We must make sure that we are leading an honorable life in the eyes of our Creator. Standing firm in the faith with firm resolve, immovable in our faith!

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. - 1 Corinthians 15:58

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KEY SCRIPTURE: **ROMANS 12:5**

HONORING CHRIST BY THE WAY WE TREAT EACH ANOTHER

"Sympathy means that we might weep with those who weep (Romans 12:15). This is an emotional but effective demonstration of the bond we share. And, when we humble ourselves and practice these godly values, we not only live honorably, but we also honor God."

The inspiration for our theme comes from **Philippians 1:20**:

"As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

Based on this theme, I'd thought I'd write this article based on honoring Christ by the way we treat each other, as brothers and sisters in Christ. You see, as Christians, we have a bond/ fellowship. **Romans 12:5** tells us that we are individually members of one another! Thus, we have a special bond or tie that binds us together.



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At my congregation, we have song-books titled "Hymns for Worship." If you have this song-book, I'd like to invite you to get it out and open it to hymn # 302. (If you do not have this song-book, you can google the song online). The title is "Blest Be The Tie." I'd like to suggest that you follow along in the song-book if you can, as well as look up the Scriptures in your Bible that I will share with you. My prayer is that you will gain some insight on how vital it is to have great relationships with our brethren, which is one of the ways we honor Christ!

FIRST VERSE:**"BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS OUR HEARTS IN CHRISTIAN LOVE..."**

Consider first what the tie that binds is not. It is not an earthly tie, such as; Friendship, Marriage, or Family-- All of which are either social or physical ties. It is not broken like earthly ties, such as through separation, incompatibility, or death.

Consider then what the tie that binds us is: It is Love. This is a heavenly bond, not easily broken (**Colossians 3:14**). This tie that binds us comes from the God of love, as we understand by reading **1 John 4:7-11**. It is love, learned from the example of Christ (**Galatians 2:20**). It is love, serving as a mark of true discipleship (**John 13:34-35**).

In the second part of verse 1, we sing: **"THE FELLOWSHIP OF KINDRED MINDS IS LIKE TO THAT ABOVE."** This tie involves a unity for which Jesus prayed for (**John 17:20-23**). It involves a unity of mind for which Paul prayed for in his letter to the church in Philippi (**Philippians 2:2**). Therefore, any threat to this unity is strongly condemned as Paul writes in his 1st letter to the church in Corinth (**1 Corinthians 1:10**). This tie seeks to emulate the unity between the Father and the Son. The tie that binds us is based upon the love and unity which Christ makes possible. How it is manifested is illustrated in the remaining verses of this song.

SECOND VERSE:

In the first part of the second verse, we sing this: **"BEFORE OUR FATHER'S THRONE WE POUR OUR ARDENT PRAYERS."**

We are truly blessed to be able to approach God in prayer. This is a privilege enjoyed only through Christ (**Hebrews 4:14-16**) and comes with great promise (**Philippians 4:6-7**).

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This song depicts frequent and fervent prayer and should inspire us to pray for one another, (**James 5:16**). and as we see demonstrated in **Acts 12:5**. Praying *with* another is also an important part of our prayer life. We see very clear examples of this in the book of Acts: **Ac 1:14; 2:42; 12:12; 21:5**. As verse 2 of our song also reads: **"OUR FEARS, OUR HOPES, OUR AIMS ARE ONE, OUR COMFORTS AND OUR CARES."** We have similar concerns and desires (some because we are simply fellow humans in this world), we desire to be healthy, we fear sickness and death. We enjoy the comforts of life; we fear joblessness and poverty. We share the same hope of the resurrection and eternal life, as Peter wrote in his letters. We share similar struggles and temptations. Let's take a look at a few of those passages written by the apostle Peter: **1Pe 1:3; 1Pe 5:8-9; 2Pe 1:2-3; 2Pe 1:4**. As Christians, therefore, we have much in common. Because we are partakers of divine nature, grace and peace are multiplied (**2 Peter 1:2; Jude 2**). Our shared experiences enhanced by our spiritual blessings strengthen our tie! The next verse focuses on mutual problems we sometimes face.

THIRD VERSE

Take a look at verse 3: **"WE SHARE OUR MUTUAL WOES, OUR MUTUAL BURDENS BEAR..."**

As Christians, we are to bear one another's burdens. Paul writes about this in **Galatians chapter 6: verses 1&2**. In times of spiritual weakness, we are to pray for one another (**James 5:16**). In times of persecution, we are to remember one another (**Hebrews 13:3**). In times of physical need, we are to provide for one another (**James 1:27**). Manifested in these ways, the tie (**Continued on page 25**)

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we have in Christ is truly a blessing! In the latter part of verse 3 of the song, we sing these words: **"AND OFTEN FOR EACH OTHER FLOWS THE SYMPATHIZING TEAR..."** Because that is how God composed the body of Christ! Take a look at: **1 Corinthians 12:24-26**. Sympathy means that we might weep with those who weep (**Romans 12:15**). This is an emotional but effective demonstration of the bond we share. And, when we humble ourselves and practice these godly values, we not only live honorably, but we also honor God.

FOURTH VERSE

The final verse of the song describes the impact of the tie that binds, when it comes time to separate, even temporarily... **"WHEN WE ASUNDER PART, IT GIVE US INWARD PAIN..."**

The tie is so deep that departure can be painful. Consider the example of Paul and the Ephesian elders as we see recorded in **Acts 20:36-38**.

Maybe you've never experienced such pain? Perhaps you may need to examine the condition of your bond. As the latter part of verse 4 reads: **"BUT WE SHALL BE JOINED IN HEART, AND HOPE TO MEET AGAIN."** We might be separated in the flesh, but we remain together in spirit. Paul wrote this to the Saints at Colossae: **(Colossians 2:5)**.

As unified Christians, we are comforted by a wonderful hope. The hope of the resurrection (consider, **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**). This resurrection is made possible by the resurrection of Christ, and our faith in Him: **1Pe 1:3-5**.

"Blest Be the Tie," is a beautiful song that describes the blessings of our oneness in Christ. This song expresses how Christians should truly feel for one another. But, it describes blessings experienced only by those who've been added by Christ to His church and who are diligent in preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (**Eph 4:1-3**).

So, as we reflect upon **Philippians 1:20**, and as we reflect upon the many challenges in our society today, let us focus on the tie that binds us together: Christ Jesus. Some of us have had to separate, reduce or cancel services—due to the Coronavirus. Some are unable able to attend because of safety concerns. But we can remain bound together honorably, through Christ.

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FREE LESSON OUTLINE

FEAR OF DEATH.

A) It is typical for most to fear death

- 1) King Hezekiah (**2 Kin** 20:1-6).

B) Christian must put life in proper perspective

- 1) Everyone will die some day.
 - a) **Eccl** 9:1-6, 10; **Heb** 9:27; **Eccl** 12.
- 2) Death is a consequence of sin.
 - a) **Gen** 3.
- 3) Faithful Christians have no need to fear
 - a) Jesus conquered death! (**Heb** 2:14-15; **Rom** 8:15.)
 - b) Death is a doorway to glory (**1 Thes** 4:14-18; **Rom** 6).

C) Those Who Should Fear Death

- 1) Non Converts to Christ (**2 Thes** 1:3-11).
- 2) Christians who continue in sin (**Heb** 10:26-31)
- 3) Unfaithful Christians (**Rev** 2:8-10).

