

LIVING FOR JESUS



Author's photo 1997

**WE MEET AT PHILIPPI-JULIUS CAESAR
THE CHALLENGE EVEN TODAY
IS TO LIVE FOR CHRIST
AFTER THE PHILIPPIAN MODEL**

**LIVING FOR JESUS
“FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST-TO DIE
IS GAIN”**

*I adopted Philippians 1.21 as my motto for living as a young Christian
and commend the principles of Paul recorded in Philippians to every
student of scripture - Bob Coffey*

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EXCERPTS FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF A 1997 DAY VISIT TO PHILIPPI BY BOB AND MINA COFFEY

We were tired & it was late when my wife and I drove from Neapolis just past Philippi's eastward gate –reaching Lydia- a small farming village named after the “purple seller” of Acts 16.14. We were dog tired for we had traveled from Athens-a distance of approaching 400 miles. The journey took us by the Euboean gulf, Mt Olympus, the Pass of Thermopulae, Berea, Amphipolis and lovely Kavalla then over the mountains from which Alexander's father Philip dug the gold for his coinage with which he paid his armies and so we were led by an obliging farmer on his tractor into Lydia.

In the morning I opened the shutters and stood aghast as a neighbour to the Hotel Lydia where we stayed was raising Corinthian column sections from his garden to plant some greens. Soon we were at breakfast which had plenty of chocolate shaken over it. I was restive to get out to explore because I had seen a stream from the window and wondered was it the one where Paul & Silas met Lydia and other ladies at the ancient Prayer Cell-indeed if it was near where Lydia and others were baptized.

Just as we left the hotel frontage directly across the road we spotted a life-size terra cotta Roman soldier and soon realized he stood at the very city gate of ancient Philippi. Would we go to the river or to the city? We had an introduction from the leader of the church in Athens to the assistant administrator of the historic ruins. The lady like Lydia was a Christian -but we reckoned there was time to go over the road and uphill when the village came alive. After a few minutes walk we were by the little Lycus stream-a there was a modern baptistry marking the very place where Paul baptized and within a stone's throw a small chapel marking “ the Place where Prayer was wont to be made.”

This was one of the best days of my life for I have always loved Philippians and early chose Philippians 1.21 “For me to live is Christ” as my motto; but to see the place and stay overnight just outside the old now fallen walls was a wonderful treat.

Soon we were among the ruins of the city. Right in the centre was a Bema or judgment throne which stands out as a reminder that we shall all stand before the Bema of Christ and account of our lives. Along an adjacent street were the quite sophisticated public toilets. Yet another area brought to our attention heart shaped pillars which we had not seen before and higher up the city and running westward was the Egnatian way. Hard by the old Roman Road were the preserved remains of the Roman prison where the Jailor shouted out “What must I do to be saved?” to which of course Paul & Silas replied “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved...and your house in the same manner”

The city had been a very great city – and nestled below the cliffs to the south of the Acropolis where the Egyptian tradesmen had carved their gods. Philippi in Paul's day was a Roman “Colonia” on the Via Egnatia.



In the arable plain stretching to the north Julius Caesar strove in battle with Octavian and so the Roman Republic died & the Roman Empire was born. From here in Europe the Faith of Jesus in its 50th year became world-wide. We walked along toward the plain and at one point a farming family with hoes and the simplest of tools trundled past us to work their field. Mechanisation had not come to Lydia. Amid the ruins of Philippi we were shown the rare “heart pillar bases” by the administrator who very kindly took time off to show us around.. This city was host under Paul in 49-50AD to a church which experienced and exemplified the love of Jesus. The Philippian letter is a prison epistle written from Rome – yet Paul rejoices (there are no fewer than 16 references to joy). To Paul joy is a bird unchained.

During our visit we came armed with an introduction from the Church in Athens to the assistant administrator of the historic site at Philippi to whom I have alluded above– she was one of the continuing church at Philippi today – a member of the evangelical church that meets there much in the character of the first church in Lydia’s house. She happened to be on leave but the Administrator himself kindly took time off to help us explore the extensive archaeological site in depth. An inventory was in progress taking account of every detail of the site which, as we observed, had been very well preserved. The demarcation of roads, forum, bema, market area, and toilets and even the prison walls and entrance were easily recognisable even to the uninitiated visitor. Later that day we took our leave of the administrator but carry until this day warm memories of the rustic village nestling hard by the ancient ruins and a lasting impression of the grandeur of the colony and its mighty acropolis.

PHILIPPIANS –GENERAL COMMENTS

*F. B. Meyer whose practical ministry set up the poor as window cleaners and provided firelighter carts to work the streets of Leicester in his day spoke of the grades of Christian consecration in this way; he said, **“IN ALL HIS PEOPLE CHRIST IS “PRESENT” - IN “SOME” “PROMINENT” IN A FEW “PRE-EMINENT”**. Hanley Moule classed this book as among “the fairest & dearest regions of the book of God”. Here we cannot but recognise that where our faith is concerned grace makes soldiers and Paul as C. T. Studd would have said was no “chocolate soldier”*

PAUL’S TEACHING ON CHRIST & CHRISTLIKENESS-Philippians 2

This chapter is world famous among Christians for Paul’s treatment of Christ’s Humiliation and Exaltation. Finlayson’s truism states the doctrine in a kernel “He remained what He was when He became what He was not.” Dean Farrar has it that the epistle sets out the basis of witness – humility & unselfishness.

C. M. Noel put the humiliation of Christ most memorably into verse

*“Humbled for a season to receive a name,
From the lips of sinners unto whom He came
Faithfully He bore it spotless to the last
Brought it back victorious when from death He passed”*

*Wesley wrote “And can it be “with those memorable words which have attracted debate viz. ”**Emptied Himself of all but love** and died for Adam’s helpless race”.*

Lightfoot’s felicitous phrase gets the theology just right when he says “He stripped Himself of the insignia of majesty”

THE FOUR HYPOTHESES OF REAL CHRISTIANITY

*If there is any **coming alongside** any advocacy in the circle of Christ.

*If there is any stimulant or **lighted torch of love** or any **legend** of love in that circle of Christ (any “behold how these Christians love one another”)

*If there is any **partnership** of the Holy Spirit – any “joint engagement”

*If there is any sacrificial compassion or **inward tenderness** – i.e. “heart longings” coming from union with Christ make my joy complete – think alike kindly of one another, have a grip on the same love, being alike in warmth of soul – think as one or stay wise, pragmatic and united in mind.

STRENUOUSLY AVOID NEGATIVE THINKING – cf. **Christian athletes 1.27**

Do nothing in party spirit or for empty glory. Here Paul is using two words which relate – KENODOZIA and KENOSIS. The first describes man who has lost the glory of God and tries to substitute for it by material glory. Christ by contrast left THE GLORY OF HEAVEN behind and came in utter humility and plain humanity to redeem us to God. Paul says, “with carpet humility” TAPEINOS count others “head & shoulders” above yourself.

Paul advises that we should not be mere housekeepers – looking at our own affairs – but also “look to” the need of others. The apostle uses the term (SKOPEO) “sceptic” in a positive manner of “one who gives thought to (others).” So “strive together as *athletes for the faith* of the gospel” (1.27)

THE MIND OF CHRIST-HUMILITY

The word PHRONEO speaks about thinking of “practical” & “new” things. *Look at how Christ was prepared to think out of the box-to consider you and me.* He had the beautiful form of God ISA – equal in rights rule & force. Yet He became man. He thought it not “robbery” to be equal with God. The word ARPAGMON speaks of “plunder” – its root is akin to drawing water from a well. The bucket water is not stolen – the well is still full.

Parallels in John 17... v5 Parallel in glory, v5 Parallel in past eternity, v8 parallel love for us, v14 parallel in word etc. Paul is perhaps clearer than those who came after him. In writing to the Romans before the Gnostic use of Neo-Platonic “logos” doctrine emerged Paul stated that Jesus Christ is God’s Son “Who was **brought forth or engendered from the seed of David**(Mary) according to the flesh and marked out, determined or described in **finite boundary or horizon of the Son of God in the circle of** “untrammelled power (δυναμις) according to the Spirit of holiness through **the resurrection from the dead.**”

NICEA (BITHYNIA) 325 AND CHALCEDON 451

Arius of Alexandria argued that if the Son was “begotten” there was a time when he was not. His bishop *Alexander* disapproved basing his response on **Hebrews 1.3**. “The Son is the radiance or effulgence of the Glory of the Father” and to deny the eternity of One puts the eternity of both in question.. Still Alexander views the Son as “generate” but not “divided from”. The argument was really on “Unity of substance” or “oneness”. Fifty years before *Sabellius* (a Libyan) thought of God as “A n orb, heat and light” i.e.” one” with three different names stuck on-“manifestations” not “persons”. At Nicea the creed of *Eusebius of Caesarea*(*the most learned man of his time*) was adopted. “Christ was God of God, light of light, life of life, Son only begotten. Firstborn of Creation-**begotten before all ages**, through whom all things were made”. Nicea added “of one substance” and “of distinct being “ (HOMOUSIOS) though “one substance”. *Constantine* gathered 90 bishops at Nicea- but the decision was a party one made by default because most bishops were too conservative to be content with Origen’s interpretation and disagreed with *Eusebius of Nicomedia* (An Arian) and so they joined perforce with Eusebius.

It was after *Apollinarianism* (“heresy that the Logos replaced “soul” in Christ” so Christ would have no “mind” opposed by *Gregory* of Nazianzus), *Nestorianism* (the heresy that Jesus was two characters- “word and God” or “man and made God by the Spirit! Opposed by the 12 anathemas of *Cyril* of Alexandria) and *Eutychianism* (the heresy that “after the incarnation Christ was one nature” opposed by Flavian and *Leo* whose tome stated ““I and the Father are one”(divine nature) and “The Father is greater than I”)(**John 10.30& 1428** –of Christ’s human nature)...it was I say after these heresies that Chalcedon (500 Greek bishops defined orthodox Christology in the words “Christ the Son, Lord, Only begotten, is recognised **in two natures** without confusion change division or separation”-in effect Christ became man and so continues to be God and man in two distinct natures forever.

To sum up if you want a verse that crystallises all that Jesus is go to **Romans 1.3** where Paul speaks of Christ “as to his human nature descended from David(i.e. born of Mary) and through the spirit of holiness declared to be the Son of God with power(**DUNAMIS**) through the resurrection from the dead”

COMMENTARY ON THE POST APOSTOLIC FATHERS

Justin Martyr(who wrote “Some there are of your race(Jews) who allow that He is Christ, but declare Him to be a man of men; with whom I do not agree” i.e. Christ is God) and *Tertullian* (who taught “Christ was generated before all worlds” and that “The son of God is born; it is no shame because He must bear shame. And the Son of God died-it is absolutely incredible, because it is absurd and unsuited. And He rose from the sepulchre; that is certain because it is impossible”) and *Ignatius* (who taught that “flesh belongs to Christ permanently in heaven” and *Irenaeus* (who taught that Christ was God-man and who said “the birth of Christ is “inenarrabilis”-incapable of describing. “The Father is the invisible of the Son and the Son the visible of the Father”.) Both Irenaeus and Ignatius start from the historic Jesus not the cosmic Logos though Christ is the “eternal word” with an eternal personal pre-existence and He is “*unbegotten.*” As *H.R Macintosh* shows the sub apostolic teaching of “**eternal generation**” assumes “An independent **personality** issuing from the Godhead at a past point in time to be abdicated at a future time”. This understanding poses the serious danger of disposing of the truth of the “eternal Son” of God. The statement of scripture “That God may be all in all” does not presume *abdication of personality* but *submission of role* to the sovereign will of ADONAI ELOHIM.

Yes our Lord emptied Himself – EKENOSEN. This is an *aorist*-describing a once-for-all act. He is still man in the glory. It is not just that He emptied Himself– Isaiah 53.12 “He poured out His soul unto death” [Isaiah 57.6] “A drink offering”. Like Joseph in Egypt our Lord is now exalted as the Great Shepherd and servant of His people.

He **became** a servant – every inch a servant, “essentially” a servant – with intent “to stay” a servant – even in eternity.” Even in glory He will rise “Joseph like” to serve his brothers – He **became** like man – continuing thus as well – “exalting manhood for ever. The theological debate has raged over the word HOMOI-OUSIOS – that strange combination of “being” and “likeness” This generic likeness to Man does not, however, entail the post-fall sinful nature but simply true or genuine humanity.

He **became** obedient to death – “In this supremely He makes our lives comfortable – he obeyed till death – till the very point – though it drew Him through blackest passion – strenuous obedience – glad obedience – surest sign of the head of the second race.

He continues to serve – to represent men as man, to comfort as he listens to our prayer

JESUS IS EXALTED HIGH OVER ALL

Christ did not grab for deity *as an exile coming home* (Eusebius) – it was his own – he seized the station of a servant – that was his vow – his mission – his great undertaking – cf Isaiah 53 Wherefore God gave him a name or “cheerfully named him” CHARIZO. *Tyndale* calls this “the investiture of Christ”. God’s purpose was that every knee shall bow to Christ KAMPO – the *turning post* in a chariot race was the half way stage – and as history has rolled on Christ’s victory becomes clearer – mighty change is under way. It’s ultimate is when angels, men and demons humbly acknowledge His purposes and cede their own. This is called Hyper-exaltation v9 – what the hymn-writer calls exaltation to “the central height”. Christ is victorious. Jesus is Lord.

The three estates bow to Him – EPOURANION (the heavenly) – even demons EPIGEION (the demonic) – more and more and KATACHTHONION (the dead) – buried ones – confessing in full the Lordship of Christ.

GETTING YOUR THINKING SORTED

Homer wanted men to “**think**” – the battle is to **think** like Christ & win. Paul wants us to become Christ-like **thinkers**

HAVE THE SAME MIND AS CHRIST

Think unity; think about getting alongside others; about holding love’s torch aloft; about working with the Holy Ghost, about being compassionate.

PUTTING OTHERS FIRST

Add comfort and tapestry to others’ lives. Entertain no party spirit, intrigue, canvassing, or vain glory.

Lord help me live from day to day in such a self-forgetful way.

That even when I kneel to pray – my prayer shall be for others.

WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING –The cup of Christ and the way we are to go evokes trembling humility and joy – for God is at work in our hearts to develop the servant spirit.. The Christian life is based on obedience and characterised by faithfulness to the commission – and attended by inner fear and trembling – at the implications of being a servant – “I was with you in fear weakness and much trembling (1Corinthians 2.3). The ancient evangelical prophet Isaiah is quoted by Paul. He says “These are the ones I look on with favour: those who are humble and contrite in spirit, and who tremble at my word.” Isaiah 66.2 Such faithfulness keeps trusting even when things seem not to go smooth and days or even a year of small fruitfulness comes around-see Habakkuk 3.16 -18. The prophet’s lips tremble in famine – as he records Gods judgment – but rejoices as he remembers God’s mercy.

Though the fig tree does not bud
And there are no grapes on the vines,
Though the olive crop fails
And the fields produce no food,
Though there are no sheep in the pens
And no cattle in the stalls,
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will be joyful in God my Saviour.

LIVE WITHOUT COMPLAINING –Take care in speech so that nothing can be alleged against you AMOMOS and see that words are not mingled like wine – truth along with error AKERIOI – so that

you may be genuine sons of God without brand of Satanic rebuke amid a generation that turns back. You shine like stars holding forth the word of life so that I may boast I neither ran nor toiled in vain. Then Paul says “If I pour out my life (*he expects to do it – the word “if” and the word “when” in Hebrew are interchangeable*) it is a drink-offering on top of their sacrifice & ministry. We are reminded of David when his worthy followers were ready to imperil their lives to obtain the desired drink from the well by the gate of Bethlehem. David solemnly poured out the water as a libation to the “self-giving” of his loyal men. Two worthies were equally at the ready to assist Paul – they were Epaphroditus (who is probably the leader of the church and the “true companion” of 4.3 whom Paul exhorts to be joyful and gentle and safe in God’s peace whilst thinking nobly, truthfully, justly entertaining pure and beautiful thoughts) and Timothy – one coming from Philippi to Rome – the other going in the reverse direction. The two stalwarts are described with glowing words. Timothy is “precious as life” (ISOPSUCHON), and of Epaphroditus Paul says “he gambled with his life for me” (PARABOLEUSAMENOS) to bring the support and care from Philippi” to the apostle under house arrest in Rome.

PROGRESS IN JOYFUL CHRISTIANITY

It is God’s will that we should rejoice in Christ. The apostle gives us eight reasons which draw seven circles round the name of Jesus because of what He means to us. Christ is our *mediator* 1.3; Christ is being preached as the *victorious* conqueror 1.8; Christ *overrules* as he did previously in the prison life of Paul at Philippi & no doubt would again in Rome 1.12. Besides we rejoice in the *condescension* of Christ 2.1; in *the prospect of meeting* the Lord when he comes in the Parousia 2.17; in His *keeping power daily* 2.29; in Christ *enthroned* in our lives 3.1-3; and in Christ near *at hand* 4 4-5. Why should life be dull. C.S. Lewis wrote a book about his conversion entitled “Surprised by Joy”. The whole experience of being a Christian and knowing the Lord renders life so deeply purposeful. With Christ in the vessel we can smile at the storm and believers are taught to “count it all joy” when we fall into divers trials because trouble works patience and when patience has rounded our character we lack nothing.

Rejoice in glorious hope; Jesus the judge shall come,
And take His servants up to their eternal home;
We soon shall hear the archangel’s voice;
The trump of God shall sound “Rejoice” (Charles Wesley)

This is the day that the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.