

Philippians 1:3-6, 19-27
June 2, 2019

“In Memoriam Tribute“

This letter to the Philippians is an amazing compilation of what God can do with a person’s life when they take God at His word and seek to live in light of that perspective

We will all come to some point in our lives where we will be brought before a church pulpit or the pulpit at a funeral home where someone will speak of us as leaving this earthly realm and being ushered into eternity.

Where some pastor, hopefully will be able to genuinely say of our lives what Matthew 25 says, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!”

Where a eulogist could say with confidence of us, when a casket sits in the front of our church and flowers adorn the landscape as
2 Timothy 4 echoes - he or she has fought a good fight, has finished their course, has kept the faith:

Many things have been said about someone or in tribute of someone after they have died.

One of the most famous tributes is IN MEMORIAM,

A poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson, written between the years 1833 and 1850 and published anonymously in 1850.

Consisting of 131 sections, a prologue, and an epilogue, this work examines the different stages of Tennyson’s period of mourning over the death of his close friend Arthur Henry Hallam.

In Memoriam reflects the Victorian struggle to reconcile traditional religious faith with the emerging theories of evolution .

The verses show the development over many years of the poet’s acceptance and understanding of his friend’s death.

An enormous critical and popular success, the poem also won Tennyson the friendship of Queen Victoria and helped bring about, in the year of its publication, his appointment as poet laureate.

It is widely considered to be one of the great poems of the 19th century.

He views the cruelty of nature and mortality in light of materialist science and faith.

The most frequently quoted lines in the poem are perhaps these

*I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.*

Now I doubt that anyone will spend that much time writing about me or you after we leave this earth , but I believe we would all hope that something could be said or written that would reflect that it was worth our time to be here on earth.

God's word says this in Philippians 1:3-6, 27-28

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Paul begins our time with what I have labeled

Remember your Friends – Philippians 1:3-6

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

As we contemplate these verses it is vital that you know and many of you may already realize that Paul was writing these words from a Roman prison cell.

He was in chains, chained to a Roman guard, as he penned these words, so he was not being flippant when he shared these thoughts.

I had the privilege to officiate a funeral on Thursday, and the interment at Alexander memorial cemetery was breathtaking to behold the hundreds of plots that had been adorned on Memorial Day with beautiful flowers in remembrance of loved ones and friends.

As we will see he was not even sure if he would live or die, but he knew he was loved.

But he begins with this tribute and announcement of what brought him joy.

When you are in prison or even facing a life or death situation you will most likely share the things that matter most in life.

Paul's primary focus was on the church and not his circumstances

He was focusing on their faithfulness.

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ...

...I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership (your teamwork) in the gospel from the first day until now.

Paul was saying that one thing that mattered was that they were faithful in sharing the gospel even while he was imprisoned.

Many in this region had been faithful to the cause of Christ and he remembered them. They were friends, but even more so brothers and sisters in Christ.

He may have remembered the time in a Philippian jail when after delivering a demon possessed girl, and being thrown in jail with Silas, God delivered them and even caused the salvation of the jailor and his family because of Paul's faithfulness

Paul also remembered these friends because he always was praying for them. In this life you need friends who pray for you and you need to be praying for them.

He goes on to say

...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Paul was thoroughly persuaded, absolutely confident because of his trust in God and God's promises from his word that God would finish His work of salvation in these friends

The one who began this work in you will not leave you or forsake you. He would say later in Philippians 2 ... **for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.**

And he would continue this good work, this supreme purpose until the day of Christ, the day that you are perfected and glorified and become like Jesus.

We continue with what I identify as

Remember your Calling – 1:19-21

¹⁹for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ²⁰I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

When I remember the prompting from the Lord to consider the ministry it was monumental.

From that time on I had a calling on my life, and it changed my outlook, because from that point forward I wanted more than anything to live up to that calling, not to disappoint my family, my friends, my church and my Lord.

Has there been a time where you felt called or chosen for an important task, where your main priority was not to disappoint those you love and those that love you?

If so remember why that made such a difference and continue to strive for that goal.

Paul wanted these Philippians to remember their calling as well, AND by reminding them of his calling and how he was pleasing to God, and how they had a part in him being pleasing to God **they would have hope; they would want nothing else but to be pleasing to God.**

Sharing their obedience to the Lord and declaring the fact that they had trusted Jesus as their savior. They were saying God has done something on the inside, I want to declare it publicly on the outside.

Paul said ¹⁹for I know that through your prayers and God's provision what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

He was saying that they were partners with God in what was happening in Paul's life. Paul knew that his present circumstances were temporary, and whether he lived or died God would be honored, and they would be encouraged.

He says this

²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Paul wanted the best for those he led.

He also was wanting them to have courage even when things looked tragic.

He wanted them to never be ashamed of naming the name of Christ.

The battle for your mind and body and life in this world, and from this world often is not the threat of bodily harm but of being ashamed.

Ashamed to say I am on the Lord's side.

He wanted to increase their courage and their unashamed boldness.

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Literally To live Christ – To die Gain

He was echoing the thoughts from Acts 20 when he said

²⁴ However, **I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race** and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.

O that we could all say that with Paul

I need more courage to say that with boldness!!!

He continues with what I share as

Remember your Future – 1:22-26

²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Several months ago I had the honor to officiate the service for the firefighter who was shot and killed.

I had the opportunity to look out on a crowd of over 200 firefighters.

A strange thought entered my mind, for that moment I felt so safe from a fire breaking out in that church sanctuary

WHY because I stood in the presence of over 200 people who were experts at putting out fires. Experts at rescuing people from harm.

If would be similar to being sick on an airplane and when they asked is there a doctor in the "house" everyone on the plane declared they were a doctor. That would boost your confidence in being taken care of and brought back to health.

But my main goal that day, at the request of the mother and father in law of that fireman was to share the gospel.

To let those who were familiar with rescuing others from death and destruction and flames.

That they too needed to be rescued by the ultimate hero, the ultimate savior, the ultimate firefighter. Because the Lord of heaven is the only one that can rescue us from the flames of hell.

²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

Paul realized as all of us should realize that as long as the Lord gives us breath here on earth that we have opportunity to be fruitful, to honor the Lord.

He realized that if his life was extended that they would be blessed.

He was speaking of the fruitful works that Ephesians 2 mentions

¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, (God's masterpieces) created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

You ever think of yourself as a masterpiece molded and created specifically to do what he calls you to do
Remember your future is linked with the present

We serve here because we have a glorious future where we can rejoice forever with those we may have had a part in helping the Lord rescue.

Paul goes on

²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Paul knew that heavenly joys were better than prison chains, that streets of gold were better than cold prison floors, that worshipping the king was better than enduring the jailor's persecution.

So why was he torn, because any good Christian understands that even though being with the Lord is **unimaginable, indescribable**

Being with those who need our blessing, being with those we love is necessary until the Lord takes us home.

As long as the Lord had work for Paul to do, that is where Paul wanted to be.

We close with this.

Remember your Conduct – 1:27-30

²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

²⁷ **Whatever happens**, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Whether Paul was alive and serving the Lord and the gospel work, or whether he went home to be with the Lord he wanted them to maintain their steadfast hope in the gospel and a consistent life of faithfulness to God.

He would reemphasize this in Philippians chapter 2 when he says to them -
15 so that you may become blameless and pure, **“children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”** Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky,
16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. **And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.**

Paul knew generations ago that the church would always face extreme opposition, extreme persecution.
That the church would always face a perverse culture.
We should not be surprised at what we face today in our culture.
When we see the culture disintegrating remember your conduct.

Be as Paul says blameless and pure, children of God.
Be good citizens of heaven here on earth.

Remember your ultimate citizenship is in heaven **ACT LIKE IT**

...Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you

This standing firm is an interesting word in the Greek it is **steko**, which refers to steadfastly holding one's ground regardless of danger or opposition.

One author puts it this way.

The word was used of a soldier who defended his position at all costs even to the point of sacrificing his life.

It refers to holding strongly to a belief, or conviction, or principle without compromise, regardless of personal cost. END QUOTE

Standing firm was both positive and negative.
It means to stand FOR GOD and AGAINST SATAN

We cannot be content just to protect ourselves against the enemy but to be willing to help others get out from under his control.

Stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together

This again gives us the challenge and hope of Unity, ultimate cooperation controlled by the Spirit of God

When we see ourselves as **one family** together with others, we gain strength knowing we are not alone in the battle.

When David defeated Goliath it not only strengthened the Israelites but weakened and demoralized the Philistines

We gain courage from each other, when I win you win, when you when I win.

Lastly,

...For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had...

The first insight is extremely positive, it is granted, it is a privilege to believe in Christ . To have a salvation that that is holy, glorifying, and eternal.

But with that extreme comfort comes extreme struggle, we will suffer for Him because we live in a world that rejected Him, therefore they will reject us.

Paul told Timothy

In 2 timothy 3:12 - In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

If you live for Him you will face opposition,

We are to encourage others, and witness to others so that they may have a place in the family of God.

In my office I have over 500 books.

Most of them have been a tremendous source of insight, wisdom, knowledge, comfort, and strength as I have navigated my 59 years of life.

The books encompass thoughts about faith and family, humor and heaven, the holiness of God and the futility of mankind

All of them have value, and one other very important similarity.

They are useless if all they ever do is remain on the shelf.

The ultimate value of any book is if it is read and the words have the opportunity to give life and blessing to the reader.

There are however three volumes that hold much more significant memories and sentimental worth. These three volumes.

A brief family history will explain this.

I am the grandson of Rev. Hudie Dillard and Jennie Dillard-Chiles.

On the eve of my freshman year of high school, on August 15, 1974, my grandfather Hudie passed away. He was a patriarch of great distinction to our family and a mentor to many others in the Hopkinsville Kentucky community he served as a pastor.

It was a devastating blow to our family to have lost such a great man at age 61.

As a fourteen-year-old I did not envision what impact he would still have on me and my future.

Nearly 29 years later, on May 29, 2003 my grandmother Jennie passed away. The loss was equally devastating because of the faithful life she had lived. Our family began the tedious task of clearing mementos from her home to be shared with family members.

I had been a pastor since 1984, but I did not fathom what hidden treasure we would uncover that day.

While looking through an old cedar chest, my mom found three notebooks of hand-typed and handwritten sermon notes from my grandfather. **She shouted to me Cliff come look at this.**

This was precious treasure that had been hidden for nearly thirty years. I spent months pouring over his thoughts, his insights into the scripture, his conversations about God, faith, eternal life, and what matters most in this life.

Most people in our nation have the privilege to own a copy of the scripture.

I want to indisputably declare to you that you have in your possession hidden treasure. In fact the scripture proclaims in Proverbs 2:3-5 , “ indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”

I would challenge you to grab that bible this week and find out just how much the knowledge of God and faith in God will enrich you.

Lastly, I share an excerpt from my grandfather’s sermon notes we found that day , where he mentioned Romans 1:16 “ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

He then commented “Jesus is real to me. The gospel is the provision which God made in Jesus Christ for the salvation and transformation of the life of mankind. It is a message intended to rejoice the hearts of those who hear it. End quote

The value of a grandfather’s notebooks, other famous books and the value of people are similar.

They all have hidden treasure within.

But they are both useless if they reside on the “shelf” and do not make an impact on their community.

My In Memoriam tribute matters. Your In Memoriam tribute matters.

Now go out there and matter to others.

Amen.

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