***Death, No. 4

The Way to Magnify Christ - PH23-02

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 1:21***

Please open your Bible to Philippians 1:21. From time to time I have the experience of attending a conference of pastors on one subject or another. I had an experience this past week attending a clinic for pastors which was sponsored by an organization which goes around the country conducting seminars on various human conflicts. I like to keep in touch with what people are learning and with what the Christian community is being introduced to through pastors, so I find it helpful to attend conferences of this nature.

However, it is always a rather gruesome experience for me in a meeting of pastors. After a quarter-of-a-century in the ministry, I have learned that pastors are a sad, sincere, frightened, and apologetic lot. Most of them don't know their job. When it is explained to them, they are scared to death to do it. They prefer playing the role of the beloved pastor in the congregation more than God's man exercising God's authority in order to salvage the flock in its own ignorance; its own wandering; and, its own self-destructive qualities which sheep always have. Therefore, it is not entirely a pleasant experience for me to find myself locked in one room with a few hundred pastors. As a matter of fact, as I sat there the other day, a chill suddenly ran through my being, and I felt the hair creeping up on the back of my neck. The thought crossed my mind, "What if the Lord should return and catch me here?"

However, I stabilized myself, and got my mind back on what I was listening to because I was finding out some very interesting things. The solutions that this organization gives are usually in the form of attractive lists of steps for sure-fire fixes to a specific problem. These list of steps to solve a specific problem are made all the more exciting by a liberal interspersing of real experiences; success stories; and, proof of how it works. It is based upon principles of often sound psychology, and therefore it does produce certain specific results. This clinic was specifically for pastors, and it was for the purpose of advising pastors on how to conduct their ministries. It was very revealing because this movement is very popular, and thus it is not only influential among Christians, but it is influential upon the leadership of the local church.

For example, we were told in that meeting that most of our time as pastors we should expect to spend in personal counseling of people. There was a general murmur of agreement which indicated that most of these preachers spend their time during the day waiting for one person after another to knock on his door or call him on the phone in order to discuss certain personal problems of counseling. This has a certain place in a pastor's ministry; there is that need; and, it is legitimately needed as it comes up. However, to say that most of your ministry is to be used in counseling raises a very interesting question immediately: When do you do your studying? When do you do your preparations to feed the flock? The Word of God would demand that most of the pastor's time should be spent in digging out the information that the flock needs, and which is pertinent and current to the situation at the moment. So they were oblivious to their roles as instructors of the Word of God, and they were not using a majority of their time, quite obviously, in personal study of the Word.

We were also told that in dealing with Christians, we want to remember that people select the church on the basis of its friendliness. The whole concept is what? There is within a human being an old sin nature. Therefore, the minute he walks in the door, start appealing to the old sin nature. Just tickle it, and make him feel warm with the glow of human good that oozes out of it. Give him a good emotional jag by the way you treat him; the way you glad-hand him;, the way you smile at him with your mouth-full-of-teeth smile; and, the way you let him know that heaven has blessed your assembly because they have walked in the door.

What is that? That is exactly the opposite of the basis upon which people should be appealed to. What a travesty to give a person the impression that if he is treated with friendliness, he has now come into contact with spiritual insights. Experience proves that most of the friendly emotional churches are leaving people starved in spiritual insights and understanding. How can a Christian ever find a place of instruction for himself on that kind of a false basis of appeal? That is pure human viewpoint guff. Yet, there was a murmur of approval over several hundred pastors, and they were going to rush right out of there. You knew they were already doing it, and they were going to do it more so now because this prestigious organization has told them that this is how they should deal with people.

All that day after I attended that meeting, I was aware of a deep sense of depression, which is very rare for me. I kept shaking it off and wondering why I felt so depressed. I suddenly realized it was because of what I had heard earlier that day which reflected the condition of the local church relative to its pastoral leadership as it exists by and large in our country today; and, consequently, the pathetic status of most of the Lord's sheep. Well, it's pathetic and it's depressing to see the lack of orientation when you get with a group of pastors with the role that they are to play in the supreme place of Bible doctrine in the lives of people when it comes to solving human problems.

Most of these pastors are probably not capable of exegesis. Thus, the problem is infinitely compounded for the flock. Consequently, they have to run some dinners. They have to kick in with something emotional in order to make people feel that they are having a spiritual experience. They have to move off into all kinds of human gimmickry and devices in order to sustain the impression that they are feeding the flock and doing their job as pastors. It is sad when the average Christian has no idea what to look for. He has no frame of reference. Those hundreds of pastors will go storming out of that place, and they will influence people even more so in their disorientation than they did before. All the instincts of a sheep of God leads that sheep to the wrong choices. What a blanket of darkness, consequently, rests upon the flock of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is no wonder people cannot cope with their problems. This gives organizations the chance to become very popular with lists of solutions to problems that believers wouldn't have in the first place if somebody had taught them the Word of God.

You and I have a problem that we need to face. We have a rendezvous with death. Consequently, when things are going well for us, we don't like to think about this subject, and we don't like to give it too much thought. There is a great deal more to say about it than what we will say, but at least we want to bring together what the Word of God has given us in order to dispel this area of darkness in our souls in order to enable us to act with real spiritual orientation at a time when death faces us and members of our families.

You will recall that the apostle Paul said that he wanted to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ both in his life on earth and through his death and transfer to heaven. Paul says, "When I stand at the Judgment Seat Christ, I don't want to be ashamed of what I discover my life has amounted to any more than I want to be ashamed of what I'm doing right now that I'm living here on this earth in the body, nor in my immediate future when I face Nero in that court. I don't want to be ashamed of the way I have represented the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Nature of Physical Death**

So, first of all, I want to bring together a summary of the nature of physical death. Here is what it is all about. This is what Paul has in the back of his mind in the things that he has been talking to us about.

1. At death, the believer does not go to Hades or any kind of purgatory. This is taught in Romans 8:1 and Hebrews 9:27-28. We are told in the Word of God that everybody is appointed to the divine settlement of the lake of fire by the sheer fact that you are born with an old sin nature. That appointment to the lake of fire is canceled by believing the gospel and entering the family of God. That changes your destiny from the lake of fire to heaven. The only opportunity however to escape that appointment to hell is while you are in the body. Once you leave the body, you cannot change your destiny. Hell, or the lake of fire as the Bible calls it, is a place of burning agony with no end to it ever. All are destined for it. Those who escape it are those who receive Christ as personal Savior while they are in the body because He substituted for you in spiritual death and paid the price for your sins.
2. At the physical death of a believer, the soul and spirit leave the body and go immediately and consciously into the visible presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8). I can tell you now something about the moment that you find that you are headed for death. Death means that your soul and spirit leave your body, and there are no more electrical impulses to the brain, indicating that death has taken place. You will open your eyes face-to-face with Jesus Christ just as you and I can now face one another. It will be just that real. You will be able to walk up and shake hands with Him. You will be able to walk up and touch Him. He will actually be there--a physical human being such as yourself. The soul and the spirit of the believer and the soul of the unbeliever will have perception concerning the things about them. We have this taught in Luke 16:19-31. There is no such thing as soul sleep. Even an unbeliever is aware of where he is and what surrounds him after his body has died.

Probably, the dead are not aware of what is going on down here on earth. Somebody always asks this. They say, "My father or my mother passed away recently. Do you think they are up in heaven watching me and seeing what I do?" It might help them to behave themselves to think that somebody is looking over down there. You know if your mother is watching, you don't want to do certain things. Now if it's the Lord, you don't care about that, but your mother--that's something else.

No, I don't think that the people out there can see what's going on here, nor that they are really very much interested in what's taking place with us. The dead in heaven can communicate with others in heaven, and the dead in Hades can communicate with others in Hades, but people in heaven cannot communicate with people in Hades (Luke 16:26). There is a gulf dividing between them.

1. At the physical death of unbelievers, the soul leaves the body and goes into Torments in Hades to await the judgment of the Great White Throne (Luke 16:22-23, Revelation 20:11-12). When an unbeliever dies, his spirit is dead. His soul goes directly to Hades. It does not go to hell (the lake of fire). It goes to a place called Hades, into a compartment called Torments. There it is in conscious agony and pain. The soul can feel pain without the body. It is there until the Great White Throne judgment. At that point, that body of the unbeliever is reunited with the soul, and then the soul and body together experience the pain of the lake of fire. The soul is taken out of Hades and the body out of the grave, and the two together are taken to a new place called the lake of fire, commonly referred to as hell.
2. The body is deserted in physical death, and it dissolves into the chemicals from which it is made (Genesis 3:19). The believer will receive a resurrection body unto Christ's (Philippians 3:21). The believer's soul and spirit will reunite with that resurrection body as part of the first resurrection movement (Revelation 20:5). The bodies of unbelievers are reunited with their souls as part of the second resurrection movement (Revelation 20:5).
3. For the believer, death means no more sorrow, pain, tears, or death (Revelation 21:4). For the unbeliever, there will be sorrow eternally (Luke 16:24-25, Matthew 22:13). The body of the unbeliever joins into the sorrow of his soul and the pain of his soul after he is raised in the second resurrection, right when he is cast into the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41). But for the believer, there will be no more sorrow, pain, or tears. The soul can experience sorrow, pain, and tears. That's why the Bible tells us that these are wiped away. When we come into the Lord presence, our tears are wiped away. We don't enter His presence in our body at that point. That comes later. But we do have the tears, pain, and sorrow of the soul, and that's what is wiped away.
4. The Christian at death has a dwelling place in heaven (John 14:1-3). The Lord Jesus Christ is now preparing that home to which your soul and spirit will transform itself at some point in the future.
5. The Christian at death steps into his eternal inheritance which is then seen by him (1 Peter 1:4-5). He has this eternal inheritance now, but he cannot see it now. Then he will actually see it.
6. For the Christian, death is a promotion. Philippians 1:21, which is the verse we're going to look at in this session, teaches us that. How the soul and spirit leaves your body is in the hands of the Lord. When the soul and spirit are going to leave your body is in the hands of the Lord. The process of your dying, whether it's going to be instantaneous or whether it's going to be long and drawn out; or whether it's going to be an easy or a painful death, all that is in the hands of the Lord. But God has provided you with grace to carry you through whatever it may be. When the dying is all over, just remember that you end up with the Lord. Death is a promotion.
7. Death for the Christian means waiting in a perfect place for his resurrection body (Philippians 3:21, 1 John 3:1-2, John 11:25).
8. God always take a believer's life at the right time. God is omniscient, so He has clearly the purpose of each life in mind. He takes your life at the right time (Job 5:26). That's why suicide is absolutely out of line. Suicide is imposing your timing upon the time of the Lord.
9. God provides grace for the believer at the point of dying (2 Corinthians 12:9). This dying grace expresses itself in several ways. It removes the fear of death (Psalm 23:4). It depends on who and what God is alone (Psalm 116:15). You're going to have grace at your point of dying whether you deserve it or not. Every Christian receives dying grace. That's important to remember. As God gives you grace for living, He also gives you grace when it comes time for you to die. This dying grace also provides deliverance in extreme difficulties (Job 5:17-21). It promises inner peace (Job 5:21-24). Many times it is observable that people who are dying seem to come to a point where all of a sudden they seem to be improving, where they are happier. They enter a period of peace in their souls. This is a part of God's dying grace and preparation, a final moment of happiness before you leave this life. This is a final moment of happiness to share with those about you before you leave them. So it is not entirely in order for us to say, "I just talked to him yesterday. He was so happy. He was looking forward with such enthusiasm to what he was planning to do next. Here, all of a sudden, he's gone." It's part of God's dying grace and the inner peace. Also this dying grace gives comfort to those who are left behind (Job 5:25). It removes the believer from the body at the right time (Job 5:26-27).
10. Death for the Christian means a fuller realization of eternal life (2 Corinthians 4:18). That's when you really enter into what you now possess as eternal life, but you enter into the fullness of the realization of all that that connotes. Some of you will be more prepared for entering into that fullness than others. We will be looking at that a little bit more later in this session. One of the things that you do take out with you in death is the spiritual maturity structure of your soul. I hope you understand that. Some of you, therefore, will be vastly more prepared for entering into the fullness of the realization of your inheritance in heaven and of your eternal life than others will be. Some of you are going to have to start getting ready for it after you get on the other side. You're going to be far behind those who have prepared with the Word of God on this side.
11. There is a certain significance to the death of certain people. When other people die, it is of a certain significance to those of us who are left behind alive. The deaths of other people remind us of certain things. For example, it reminds us all of the shortness of a lifetime (James 4:14, Job 14:1). It reminds us that our life can be easily and suddenly ended. The death of other people reminds us of the futility of human profit and fame (Mark 8:36-37, Ecclesiastes 5:15, Job 21:13). It matters not how important you are or how famous you are. You may have the whole country watching your funeral on television. However, there comes a time when they open a hole in the ground and you go. And they close it over, and whatever your fame amounted to, that's the end of it. It was ultimately futile. Whatever money you have, that's the end of it.

The death of other people also reminds us of the need to be prepared for our own death with salvation. We need to be prepared with salvation (Acts 16:31), so that we are ready to die. It reminds us of the certainty of judgment of those who are without salvation (John 3:18, 36, Hebrews 9:27). Every funeral, in other words, is a reminder of the universal rendezvous with death of all mankind (Psalm 89:48, Ecclesiastes 9:5).

1. God can elect to prolong life and postpone one's death (Psalm 118:18, Provers 14:27). God can elect to prolong your life.
2. Death is used as a standard of comparison to the superior strength of love (Song of Solomon 8:6). We are told that the last enemy that's going to face mankind is this thing called death, and that's the last thing that's going to be conquered by God. The way God is going to conquer it is that He's going to reverse it, and everybody who ever died (believers and unbelievers) are going to be brought back to life, and that's going to be the end of death. However, now death is a very powerful thing. We are helpless in the face of it. So the Bible uses this thing that is so powerful as the comparison of what true love really is. True love which is produced through the Word of God in the heart of a believer results in an infinitely stronger factor than death itself in our experience.
3. God delivers from imminent death in His sovereignty (Job 5:20, Psalm 33:19, Psalm 56:13, Psalm 68:19-20). If you have the occasion to be facing imminent death, just remember that God in His sovereignty often delivers believers out of what seems like a no-return situation.
4. Death is a nightmare to the one who is lacking divine viewpoint values and standards in the mind, but it is a joy to the spiritually oriented. We have some personalities who illustrate that death is a joy. For example, we have: Job in Job 19:23-27; Joseph in Genesis 50:4-26; Moses in Deuteronomy 31:28-30 and Deuteronomy 32-33; David in Psalm 23:4; Paul in 2 Timothy 4:6-8; and, Peter in 2 Peter 1:12-15. We also have examples of people for whom death was a nightmare. For example, we have Saul in 1 Samuel 28:4-7, and he was a believer. However, because he was spiritually disoriented, death with him was a nightmare. We have the rich man described in Luke 16:19-31. For him, his death became a nightmare when he realized that all that was heard concerning the other side was really the truth.
5. The Lord Jesus Christ, in His own physical death and triumph over it has brought immortality for all (2 Timothy 1:10). He has conquered death for us.
6. The last enemy of mankind to be overcome is death (1 Corinthians 15:26).
7. The death of a Christian is described in terms of the body as sleep (1 Corinthians 15:51, 1 Thessalonians 4:13). This does not apply to the soul. The soul does not sleep, but the body of a believer is viewed as something which is sleeping and which will be awakened.
8. Finally, Christians do experience sorrow at the death of loved ones and friends, but not in the hopeless fashion of unbelievers and of spiritually disoriented Christians (1 Thessalonians 4:13).

There is much more that could be spoken to as from experience concerning preparing ourselves for the issue of death. However, here is what God's divine viewpoint tells us as to what at least happens. So we understand where we're going; where others are going; what is taking place; and, what kind of hope we have in the face of such an enemy.

**Philippians 1:21**

In Philippians 1:21 the apostle Paul picks up the situation of his personal death. I want you to look, first of all, at two options that Paul gives us. The first one is the option of living: "For to me to live is Christ." The second option is, "To die is gain." This is a verse which is often glibly recited by Christians. It is one of the most abused verses in the Bible, and perhaps one of the least understood. Here is a magnificent statement of Scripture. Here is a statement that I hope you will enter into an understanding of on a new level that you have never had before. Then you will not say this verse glibly. You will say it with considerable reservations and thoughtfulness. You will be able to say it with understanding.

The apostle in verse 20 has declared to us his great expectation. He has told us that he is absorbed with a desire to see that he has no cause to be ashamed before the Lord. He wanted the Lord Jesus Christ to be "Magnified in my body." He says that this is to be, "Whether by life or by death." Paul is confident that this will be true of himself. He has a developed spiritual maturity structure with which to meet the angelic warfare in which he is engaged (as we also are).

So he begins in verse 21 with the word "for" which is the little Greek word "gar." This introduces the explanation of what he just said in verse 20. What did he say in verse 20? He said, "I want to magnify Jesus Christ in my body whether my body continues to live in the earth experience, or whether my body ceases to live in this earth experience and my soul and spirit move on to live in the heaven experience. By my life or by my death, I want Jesus Christ to be magnified; to be honored; to be glorified; and, to be esteemed in the eyes of people who deal with me." The word "for" now introduces the explanation of how he is going to do that.

In the phrase, "For to me," the words "to me" are the Greek word "ego." Here it is in what we call the dative case. It is a dative of advantage. That means it's an advantage to Paul--this which he is going to tell us. It is placed in the Greek sentence in a place of emphasis. He is placing special emphasis upon himself. Particularly, he is referring to what the Holy Spirit is going to do through his living or through his dying. He is centering his attention upon himself at this point.

"For," explaining verse 20--magnifying Christ. "To me," as far as I am concerned how God the Holy Spirit will deal in my case. "To live is Christ." The word "to live" is the Greek word "zao." This is a present active infinitive. The word "zao" is a New Testament word used to convey the concept of life itself. This is not the process of living. This is life itself. This is in contrast to another Greek word for life, "bios." This word has certain connotations. For example, it means life as a duration of time; it means life relative to the manner of one's life; or, it means life in terms of the means by which it is sustained. We would use the word "livelihood." The Greek would use the word "bios." This is a different kind of word for "life." It was a word for life which is stressing not life itself, but the process of living. That's what the word "bios" speaks of. So, we get the word "biography" from that. You can see that the "bio" part in the word "biography" comes from this Greek word. A biography is the practice; the duration; and, the manner of a person's life which is described.

However, we are dealing with this word "zao." The verb is "zao," and the noun is "zoe." This stresses life itself. Here is an important comparison for you to see in the way this is used in the Greek Bible. The word "zao" conveys the concept of a life or a moral quality of holiness. It conveys all of the highest and best that God has for the believer. It expresses the highest of God's divine blessings on a Christian. It pictures a life which is far above the animal level, although we do get the word "zoology" from "zao" which deals with the study of animals.

In the New Testament, this word "zao" gets a special kind of treatment. In John 14:6, the Lord Jesus Christ reflects this treatment when He uses the word "zao" when saying, "I am the life." Here is the way the Bible uses this word. It compares the word "zao" (to live) with another word which means death. In the Bible, "zao" and "zoe" are equated with holiness. The word for death is equated with sin. These two Greek words contrast what is associated with death (which is sin) and that which is associated with life (which is holiness--the absence of sin). Because of this contrast, the word "zao" in the Greek Bible has come to mean something more than just that which is physically alive. It means a physical life, but one that has triumphed over sin. It is the highest word for expressing a state of blessedness of a believer in fellowship with God. It refers, therefore, to what? He says, "For me to love is Christ." There is no "is" in the Greek. It is very abrupt in order to make it pungent and to make it a punchy statement. What he simply says is, "For me, the living Christ." Christ is the standard of Paul's living, and this finds expression in his experience. "For me, the living is such a thing as Christ."

What may summarize for us the life of Christ? Obviously, Christ is another way of thinking of the spiritual maturity structure in the soul because that is expressing the glory of God. These facets of the spiritual maturity structure are the facets that reflect the living of Christ. "Living is Christ" means growing and developing in one's spiritual maturity structure which reflects the glory of Christ. Paul is testifying to his own spiritual status in his imprisonment. He is telling us that he has developed a quality of spiritual maturity. Every Christian, at the point of salvation, receives 36 realities. However, though all of the Christians possess these realities, not all Christians go on to a spiritual maturity at a super grace level.

There are certain types of believers in the local church. We have the persistent learners of the Word. They get maximum benefit, and they move on toward a spiritual maturity structure. We have the erratic Christians who are on again and off again in their church attendance and their study of the Word of God. They sometimes come close to a spiritual maturity structure. However, then there are also the people who are the negligent, and they never erect anything in their souls. We may also call these: the concerned; the comfortable; and, the complainers in the local church. You may call them: the spiritual; the spiritual carnal; and, the plain carnal. You may call them: the involved (those who are building spiritual maturity); the interested (those who are on again and off again in it); and, the indifferent (those who never go in it). So, within any group of Christians, we have a range of spiritual morons to super grace geniuses in their living for Christ. A Christian with a fully developed spiritual maturity structure is a specialized breed of believers. He is of the princely group in God's family. The more that is developed, the more capacity you have to receive God's blessings. People who are always whining that they lack the blessing of God are the same people who lack spiritual maturity in their souls. They're the ones who fail to build it through the Word of God.

Paul has been doing this for many years. He has taken the Word of God into his mind; he has learned it as objective information ("gnosis"); he believes it (he has transferred it to his human spirit); he cycled it up as "epignosis" into his directive mind where he makes decisions; he built up a frame of reference; he built up his conscience; he built up a memory of categories of doctrinal truths; and, out of these evolved the five facets of a spiritual maturity structure for which he thanks God so marvelously in 2 Corinthians 12:10. This divine viewpoint is the thing that constitutes living grace. It is because of this that God provides dying grace.

You and I as Christians who live with a spiritual maturity structure in the soul are going to be attractive fun-loving people. What we're talking about is a life which is living Christ. There is always the idea among a certain group of fundamentalists that when we talk about spiritual maturity and when we can talk about being able to live Christ, they get a certain image in their minds of rigidity; of solemn conduct; and, a depressing separation to please the Lord. If you are rigid; if your conduct is solemn; and, if you hear me tell a joke and you have to think over whether you should laugh about it, then you're a depressing person.

One of the things that I don't like about speaking to other churches is that I always find other Christian groups to be tight groups. What I mean by that is that they're just ill-at-ease. I'll say something hilarious, and they're sitting there looking at around and smiling. They think that their spirituality is being compromised. These are tiresome unattractive believers who give a grace-oriented Christian the creeps. They think that they are living Christ. Why? They say things like, "I'm living Christ because I've given up my makeup."

When you are living Christ, you have a spiritual maturity structure that's in full bloom. What it produces is relaxed happiness everywhere, and this is what Paul is talking about as how he's going to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. It is really funny how many legalistic Christians love to stand up and quote this verse as their testimony. "For me to live is Christ." It's a depressive experience: "For me to live is Christ" because I am so grim, unattractive, and non-fun.

Paul says that the opposite option is, "To die." This is "apothnesko". This is another infinitive, and it matches "to live." These infinitives are really nouns, and then they've added the word "the" to it, so that it is "the living' and "the dying." This word "apothnesko" is from the Greek word "apo" which means "from the edge of something," and "thnesko" which means "to die." So "apothnesko" means to die off or to die out completely. So, the infinitive here (the dying) matches the previous one (the living). Again there is no verb ("is"). So, it sounds like, "For me the living Christ; and, the dying gain."

The word gain is "kerdos," and it means profit from a previous investment. So, a Christian dies. This is aorist active infinitive. Aorist indicates that there comes a point when your physical life ceases, and you cut out from this life. Active indicates that it happens to you, to your body. Infinitive indicates that this is your purpose. Here it's used in the form of the noun as the subject. "For me, the living Christ." This is the spiritual maturity structure in action. "The dying is gain." This is the most pathetic part about quoting this verse. How many Christians get up in a testimony meeting and say, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain?"

Do you realize what you're saying? Unless you can really say, "For me to live is Christ," which means that you have a super spiritual maturity structure functioning, you cannot say that dying is gain. Nobody in his right mind is running around and thinking that death in itself is an attractive thing. The same person who loves to quote this in a testimony meeting, you could go up to that person and say, "Listen, I appreciate it. I listened to your testimony, and how dying is gain, and you're looking forward to being with the Lord. Would you like me to pray with you that the Lord would help you to die soon? I'll enter into a covenant and I'll pray with you that soon you'll die and be with the Lord." You would have few takers, except for the nuts.

Dying is not a pleasant thing in itself. Some of you are going to die quickly. Some of you will have prolonged deaths. Some of you will go out with mangled bodies. Some of you will go out in your sleep, in one piece. Whatever the exit is, it's not a pleasant thing in itself. But once you have passed over to the other side, there is either gain or loss. You cannot say that you are going to come over there and have gain. It is true you gain by the sheer fact that you enter heaven. All those 36 marvelous wonderful points come into reality in your experience, and all of that becomes real and you do gain. However, you do not gain in a maximum sense unless you have built maturity on this side. This is something that you take with you. Dying is only gain when you can walk into heaven with an enriched spiritual maturity structure.

Do you see why it is so bad for you to drift off from real exegetical biblical instruction? Do you see why it is so bad for you to drift off into carnality and start tearing down that structure of maturity that you built over the years? You'll get it right down to rock bottom to where there's not even a foundation left, then all of a sudden, you'll come back and say, "God, I played the fool. I'm now ready to come back to where I'm instructed. I'm now ready to come back where I am responsive to you. I'm now ready to learn doctrine again." Therefore, you start building the spiritual maturity structure, but God takes your life before you get the foundation back up. You go out into eternity without gain. That is a great loss. It is a hazardous thing to let your spiritual maturity deteriorate because that is living Christ. That's Christ living in your experience. That's how He expresses himself. It's through that structure of maturity. Then when you go out into eternity, you take that with you, and that is gain as you go into the Lord's presence. That is fantastic enlightenment. Along with it, as the result of your having had this structure, you take vast rewards for divine good production with you.

You may play it any way you like, but this word "kerdos" means profit on an investment you previously made. The investment that you would be smart to make now is the investment in learning the Word of God. You should be learning the principles of doctrine. The result from your steadily taking in the Word will eventually be that there will evolve in your soul a spiritual maturity structure.

I was depressed by what I heard in that pastor's conference. I had good reason to be depressed. That is because every one of those people in the flocks of those pastors is being denied the reality of Philippians 1:21. Those people are not going to be able to stand up and say, "For me to live is Christ." They don't know anything about a spiritual maturity structure. They don't know how to build it, and they don't have the materials with which to build it. Nor can they say, "To die is gain," because their dying is going to be a great loss. They will not have a maturity to take out into eternity with them to enhance their reward and their experience before the Lord.

I hope you're making the investment.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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