

THE MAGNIFICATION OF CHRIST

“Christ shall be magnified in my body” (Phil. 1:20)

The concept of “magnification” is quite simple. A person, or an object, is viewed through a magnifying glass and it makes them look bigger. They aren’t bigger! They remain exactly the same size. They appear to be bigger, however, because they are magnified. Many will read these words with the aid of glasses. When you take off your glasses the words look small. When you put on your glasses the words are magnified. The page hasn’t changed, but your perception has.

Paul prayed that Christ would be magnified in His body, whether by life, or by death. No matter what happened to him he wanted Christ to be magnified. Jesus, of course, didn’t change and would never change no matter what Paul did. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8) Paul did not pray for Christ to change, but he did pray for Christ to be magnified in his body whether by life or by death.

The Philippian Letter, as you know, was written from prison. Though Paul had committed no crime, a series of “unfortunate” incidents led to his arrest. Paul rejoiced in such suffering for he was convinced that everything was working together for good. His present hardship resulted in the furtherance of the Gospel and converts were even made in Caesar’s household. Paul’s courage inspired others to preach the Gospel without fear. No matter what it seemed like on the surface, God was at work and Christ was being magnified in Paul’s life.

This is not always the case. Many years ago our son Steve was a student at M.U. in Rolla, Mo. and Dr. David Asbell was one of his professors. This brilliant teacher was once a political prisoner who spent sixteen years in a Russian gulag. His mental power was so great that he was able to memorize 45,000 English words in only ten days. Since Dr. Asbell was Jewish I introduced myself as a Christian. “Yes,” he replied, “I am familiar with Christianity. Adolf Hitler was a Christian”. Touche! Such a thought had never entered my mind. With a little reflection, however, I saw his perspective.

History confirms that Adolf Hitler was baptized as a Christian, became a choir boy, idolized the local preacher and dreamed of entering the ministry. The swastika was adapted by Hitler from the wall of a monastery. His infamous book, *Mein Kampf*, urged the German people to fear no one but God. On his 50th birthday every church in Germany celebrated the event with a special mass. Burt Ott, a personal friend and graduate of the Ozark Christian College, was born in Germany. His father, Adolf Ott, was a leader in the German Church, a proud Nazi, and also a devout follower of Adolf Hitler. No matter what Jesus is really like, millions of Jewish people perceived Him through the lens of Adolf Hitler and a corrupted German church. Hitler did not magnify Christ, he maligned Him.

It is sobering to realize that no matter how corrupt some may be, God has still ordained for the lost world to see Christ through believers. We are to be living letters, known and read of all men. These letters are not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God (2 Cor. 3:2,3). His Holy Spirit transforms our earthly vessels into spiritual temples. The transformation is so dramatic that we become like a city set upon a hill than cannot be hidden. Jesus told us to let our light so shine that others may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven (Matt 5:16). We are ambassadors of Christ, and ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:17-20). Christ in us is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27).

Even more remarkable than our ministry to humanity is our witness to the spirit world. God has ordained that the rulers and authorities in heavenly places see His manifold wisdom through the church (Eph. 3:10). What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God has now accomplished by means of His Spirit (Rom. 8:1ff.)

It is therefore appropriate that every believer join with Paul in this beautiful prayer: **“in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:20,21).**