

AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO LIVE AS A CHRISTIAN

Philippians 4:8

Introduction: Everyone has an "idol" or someone that he/she has admired. Children have idols, teenagers have idols and yes, adults also have idols. Who does a Christian have to admire? Who has so lived that his/her life needs to be copied? Of those examples in the Bible, one man stands out head and shoulders above most others and that man is Paul, formerly known as "Saul." As one reads of this man's ordeals as a preacher of Jesus Christ, wonderment comes as the hardships of Paul are seen and yet this man's attitude never changes toward Jesus and the decision to leave all and follow Him. Even in prison Paul encouraged others by witnessing to those who guarded him and he sent letters to those outside the prison walls. Oh, that all of us had such courage and stamina for Jesus.

I. EVEN THOUGH A VICTIM, HE WAS ALWAYS CONFIDENT (1:12-14)

1. Paul was looking at the possibilities to witness for Jesus which the situation presented.
2. Paul never thought about himself, although he was innocent of the charges.
3. Remember Joseph of the Old Testament who was sold by his brothers? He saw positive things in what his brothers did to him, not all the negative things.
4. Paul chose to see the positive and asked positive questions such as "what does God have in mind for this situation I am in now?"

II. IN SPITE OF THE ATTITUDE OF OTHERS, PAUL REMAINED JOYFUL (1:15-18)

1. Many deliberately tried to cause Paul much distress, even to the point of trying to kill him.
2. Paul had learned to leave room for each person's differences.
3. Paul teaches us that most situations and most people are not worth losing your JOY over. (When ever we do lose our joy, we become agitated, cranky, petty, and grim.)
4. "Let others be different" "So what?" Paul would say. Only when they try to change the truth of the gospel do we take offense and action.

III. PAUL WAS HOPEFUL, REGARDLESS OF ALL THE UNCERTAINTIES (1:19-20)

1. Paul's mind was fixed on the essentials and those were the things that mattered to and for Jesus.
2. Paul knew that God was in control, therefore he had a peace of mind that kept him calm.
 - Jesus was being lifted up and that gave him hope and he had no reason to be ashamed to be imprisoned, and that gave him confidence and durability.

3. Paul refused to be hurt or crippled by the words of others, no matter how critical or hurtful. He refused to wallow in self pity and refused to take criticism and attacks personally for he knew that they were really aimed at Jesus, whom he represented.

IV. BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST WAS CENTRAL, PAUL REMAINED CONTENTED (1:21)

1. "...*for me to live is...*" money, fame, power, possessions is what most people think and want.
- "...*for me to live is...*" to leave it all behind, to be forgotten, to lose everything.
2. For Paul and for us, ONLY JESUS CHRIST MATTERS. Only Jesus can satisfy. The secret of living is the same secret of being happy - being Christ centered. Living a Christ controlled life is how a Christian should live and Paul did just that.

CONCLUSION:

1. Whenever Jesus Christ becomes one's central focus, one's reason for being here, then his/her outlook on life is different.
 - The dimensions of the circumstances in life become different.
 - Limitations no longer are a bother but become more like challenges.
 - One is delivered from being preoccupied with others.
 - Their opinions, motives, and criticisms no longer seem important.
 - One's fears regarding self and the future are calmed.
 - Peace fills the void that fear leaves and fresh new hope comes to replace fear.
2. We need to learn how to let go trying to fix everybody else's unhappiness.
 - We need to let go of competing and comparing ourself with others.
 - We need to let go of all our excuses.
 - We need to let go of our frowns, tightened fists and clenched jaws (anger, frustration).
3. Let God really be in charge. Who better than God can be in charge?