

"If I Am Offered ..."

"... holding forth the word of life, that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain. Yea, and if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: and in the same manner, do ye also joy and rejoice with me" (Phi. 2:16-18).

Whatever confidence Paul had about his ultimate release (cf. 1:25); this confidence was not based upon a revelation from God (although Paul was inspired in his words) and thus we find the element of uncertainty here: *"if I am offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith."* In these verses Paul urges the Philippians to be constant in *"holding forth the word of life"* -- the primary object of which was that those benighted souls in sin might see that light and be drawn to it, much as a moth might be drawn to a flame. There was also another reason expressed here by Paul that affected him personally: *"that I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ, that I did not run in vain, neither labor in vain."* Reference to *"the day of Christ"* is an obvious reference to that *"day"* when all shall stand before the Master and account to Him for our lives. Paul longed to be able to stand before his Maker as a fruitful evangelist. He wrote the Corinthians, *"But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble, each man's work shall be manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire"* (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

This quotation is not (as some suppose), a declaration that regardless of how the Christian lives, he ultimately will be saved. The works here are not the personal deeds of the individual; they are the converts he has made in *"building upon the one foundation."* Although (God forbid) those whom a person converts is lost, that would not cause the one who taught and led them to Christ to be lost himself.

This thought is in Paul's mind here in Philippians 2: *"That I may have whereof to glory in the day of Christ that I did not run in vain neither labor in vain."* His was an unselfish ambition -- he wanted to be able to present souls to Christ who were led there by his intense efforts. We reflect upon the nearly two millennia since Paul lived, wrote and was martyred and we reflect that in the day of Christ surely untold millions will attest, *"Paul, you did not run in vain. You did not labor in vain."* Every Christian who is profited by

Paul's letters and inspired to live by the grand example he gave, are something of which he can glory in the day of Christ.

"If I am offered" is Paul's way of saying, "If I must lay down my life for my faith." He uses the word *"offered"* in his last letter to Timothy with the same idea: *"I am already being offered"* (2 Tim. 4:6). The phrase begun, "If I am offered," continues *"upon the sacrifice and service of your faith."* Here are two significant characteristics of the faith of the Philippians: a faith that is sacrificing and serving. In an earlier letter which described the financial status of these Philippians, Paul wrote of the *"deep poverty"* of the Macedonians (Philippians) (2 Cor. 8:1f). That *"deep poverty"* abounded unto the riches of their liberality. The generous gift they sent Paul which prompted this letter was very likely a gift of the same sort; and thus was the service of the faith of these brethren. The damsel who troubled Paul with her persistent message, *"These men are servants of the most High God who proclaim unto you the Way of salvation,"* did, after all, tell the truth about them (Acts 16:17)! They were servants of the Most High God. They did proclaim unto the Philippians the way of salvation. And the *"service"* Paul's faith rendered to the Philippians was not lost on them. Like the father of their faith; their faith worked as they served God and others.

Upon such an offering, if such an offering should be, Paul urged Philippians to joy and rejoice. When he added, *"In the same manner do ye joy and rejoice with me,"* in short he says, "Be happy for me if I become a martyr for the faith of Christ!"

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