**A New Standard – (Philippians 1:21)**

**Johnie Scaggs, Jr.**

Paul wrote these words, which many might find strange: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). For those who are of the world, this phrase means very little to them. It simply does not mean anything to them; it has no sway over them. However, to the child of God, it means everything. To the child of God, to live in this world is a benefit for the cause of Christ, and when the child of God leaves this world, there are promised an eternal reward. These rewards are ours because of the new standard we have chosen to live by as God’s children.

The child of God has chosen to live no longer by the world's standard but now decides to live by a new standard. As a Christian, our aim in life ought to be bringing glory to Christ. Albert Barnes, commented on this passage, had this to say about what takes place when we realize the truth about this phrase: “For to me to live is Christ.”

(1) A purpose to know as much of Christ as it was possible to know - to become as fully acquainted as he could with his rank, his character, his plans, with the relations which he sustained to the Father, and with the claims and influences of his religion; see Php. 3:10; Eph. 3:19; compare Joh. 17:3.

(2) A purpose to imitate Christ - to make him the model of his life. It was a design that his Spirit should reign in his heart, that the same temper should actuate him, and that the same great end should be constantly had in view.

(3) A purpose to make his religion known, as far as possible, among humanity. To this, Paul seriously gave his life and devoted his extraordinary talents. He aimed to see on bow many minds he could impress the sentiments of the Christian religion; to see to how many of the human family he could make Christ known, to whom he was unknown before. Never was there a man who gave himself with more ardor to any enterprise, than Paul did to this; and never was one more successful, in any undertaking, than he was in this.

(4) It was a purpose to enjoy Christ. He drew his comforts from him. His happiness he found in communion with him. It was not in the works of art; not in the pursuits of elegant literature; not in the frivolous and fashionable world; but it was in communion with the Saviour, and in endeavoring to please him.

As Paul wrote, we have changed our allegiances. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:17-18).

Because of this new standard, I now put my faith in Christ, not in the things of this world. Paul wrote, “But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:11).  He tells us, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The faith we now live by comes through the word of God, which is the standard we live according to. The evidence God has given us to follow Him is overwhelming. John wrote concerning the works of Christ:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. (John 20:30-31).

The Lord has left us unmistakable evidence of who He is and of the extraordinary life one can have by following Him. We are to look to Jesus for life, “Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

This new life means that my whole outlook on life must change. When I reason about things pertaining to life, I ask myself, “What does the Lord say about this matter?” “What does the Bible say about this?” It is no longer what I think about it. It is solely the Lord who can answer. As Matthew recorded, “… [B]ehold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Matt. 17:5). We must seek the Lord to find the answers to life's most important questions. Jesus has “all authority” (Matt. 28:18).

At one time, we all lived by a different standard. But like many others, we can change our direction. Paul reminds us of this in his letter to the brethren at Corinth.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

The standard we are to live by is not set by society, by laws of the land, by politicians or the such like, but by the Lord Himself. Let us make sure we live by the proper standard and also encourage others to do the likewise.