TALKING POINTS

Uniting Heaven and Earth:
Christ in Philippians & Colossians
Q1L3: "Life and Death"

www.MichiganSSPM.org

MEMORY VERSE: "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

This week we examine Paul's teaching on unity and the mindset we should have when facing suffering or even death for the cause of Christ.

1. Paul's mindset is worthy of emulation (Sun, Mon, Tue)

- Paul lived to magnify Christ.
    - He was confident, declaring that "in nothing I shall be ashamed, but… Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20; see also Gal. 1:22-24 and 2 Thes. 1:11, 12).
- For Paul, continued life or a martyr's death were both wins.
    - If Paul's life was spared, He would continue to win souls and mentor new believers.
        - Paul had a fatherly regard for those whom he had won to Christ (1 Cor. 4:14-16; 1 Thes. 2:10, 11; Gal. 4:19; Phile. 1:10).
        - Above all the hardships he endured, Paul's daily burden was his "deep concern for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28).
        - "If I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor… to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil. 1:22, 24).
    - If, on the other hand, Paul's life was cut short, he would rest from his labors in full confidence of eternal life with Christ.
        - Paul explained how he had a genuine "desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23).
        - This is why he could say "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

2. The *reality* of death and the *experience* of it are different (Tue)

- Paul knew and taught the truth about the state of the dead.
    - Paul's hope was in the *bodily* resurrection (see Phil 3:10, 11).
        - He describes three states of being – to be clothed in the present tent/body on the earth, "unclothed" in death, or "further clothed" with "our habitation which is from heaven" at the second coming of Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:1-4; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thes. 4:13-18).
        - "[T]hus [in this way] we shall always be *with the Lord*" (1 Thes. 4:17).

- Paul's understanding of the *reality* of death gave him confidence about the *experience* of death.
    - Paul's "desire to depart and be with Christ" was a statement about the *experience* of death, not about the *reality* of death.
        - Since the passage of time is completely unknown to the dead, their next awareness will seem to be instantaneous.
        - Paul "was no doubt aware that he would close his eyes in death and that the very next thing he would know, in the twinkling of an eye, would be seeing Jesus, who would take him, with all God's people, to the place Jesus has prepared for all who love Him (John 14:3, 1 Cor. 2:9)." Qtly, Tue, par 5

3. Bible truth is our basis of unity (Wed, Thu)

- Jesus and Paul both had a burden that the church of God would be united (see Jn. 17:20 21; Phil. 1:27).
    - Christian unity is based on God's Word (Jn. 17:17, 19).
        - "Because unity is crucial to fulfill our mission to spread this God-given message, and Jesus' prayer in John 17 highlights "the truth" of God's Word as one of the most important keys for unity, our message cannot be separated from our mission or our unity. All three stand or fall together." Qtly, Thu, par 1
- This unity will come to a crescendo in the last days (Eph. 4:13-15).
    - "We are assured that the watchmen shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Also, that in the time of the end the wise shall understand. When this is fulfilled there will be unity of faith with all whom God accounts wise; for those that do in reality understand aright, must necessarily understand alike. R. F. Cottrell, "Introduction," in Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 140 (Qtly, Fri, par 2)

CONCLUSION

"Life is short, and it is vital to make the biggest impact possible for God's kingdom within the span of the years that God grants us. No small part of that impact has to do with our encouraging "the unity of the faith." Qtly, Sab, par 3