

/ / / Whose Names Are in the Book of Life

Philippians 3:20 – 4:3

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~ Paul fully expected to be released from madman Nero's Mamertine prison someday; as we saw clearly in chapter two. Paul's hope for the future was to go around and visit the churches he had established. If we are spiritually-minded believers, that will be our hope, too. If we are worldly-minded, carnal Christians, then the church won't mean much – if anything – in our lives; and Bible study will be non-existent — although many may still go to a physical church building to display their personal self-righteousness and pride – particularly if that building is luxurious and plush. Well, the church today is supposed to be little outpost colonies of Heaven for believers who can assemble and worship God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, we can experience the joy, peace and love of God together. Those things are to be very present and real experiences for the child of God. All the way to Heaven is Heaven for the genuine believer, my friends....

III

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

~ The hope of the church can be found neither in the Great Tribulation period, nor end-time catastrophic, apocalyptic events of judgment. We are the body of Christ, and the body of Christ is not appointed to wrath, but is delivered from judgment. We are to live on a high plane of hope and joy with praise to God. Just as Enoch did not go through the flood; God kept Noah preserved in a boat, but God translated Enoch out of the world! There will be two groups of God's people during the Great Tribulation period: those taken *OUT* – as the church at Philadelphia – and then, there

will be those hundred forty-four thousand of the nation Israel — and a great company of Gentiles — who remain IN the world, and go through the day of wrath. Now, if you plan on going through the Great Tribulation period, you better get prepared to state the tribe of the nation Israel you belong to — because they are to be sealed — and Israel isn't the church.

Friends, you can forget all that mumbo-jumbo, dead-end talk. If you aren't sealed, you aren't going to make it through the great day of wrath! The bottom line is: it is literally absurd to say you believe the Bible is the Word of God, yet also espouse the church will go through the Great Tribulation period. Frankly, those who do not believe the rapture is Scriptural use the flimsiest and most obscure passages to attempt to support their theology — but they do so at the expense of tarnishing the absolute beauty of our redemption; and, they make me question their love for, and relationship with, the Lord Jesus Christ — because I don't see how one could possibly exist.

No, friends, the church has a glorious and wonderful hope in the future plan and purpose of God the Father; but the line is tissue thin between the existence of the True and Living church in the world and the completion of the rapture. Paul felt like Christ might come even at this dark moment of uncertainty in his own life. However, Paul just doesn't happen to mention the church going through that '*great day of wrath*' called the Great Tribulation period; and Paul was having much tribulation in his life at the time in which we are studying! Some people seem to think the Great Tribulation period will be as simple as the internet being out of service for a few hours. Well, the Biblical accounts are horrible beyond description. It's physical — and it happens to the earth — literally. The descriptions that are given in Revelation can be neither toned down nor tuned out.

Paul's note of gladness and hope for the future alone make it clear that he is not thinking about the church going through the Great Tribulation period. Is your hope for the future to endure those horrible things depicted in that great day of wrath? That's not much of a hope. In fact, that's no more substantive than the man who has no hope. I can tell you very definitely you are absolutely wrong. Right now, we have a fleshly body of humiliation and corruption. It's vile. Is your hope in that? When we are called to meet

Christ in the air, we will be given a new and glorified body; as Jesus had at His resurrection.

I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to that. Do you know what I am not looking forward to? – Tribulation, condemnation and judgment – because God says there won't be those things for me where I am going! Paul said, *".... behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."* That's first Corinthians chapter fifteen verses fifty-one through fifty-three — and speaks of the glorified Christ calling His Own to Him in the air at the rapture. A-men....

IV

1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

~ Our Spiritual Safari has examined the *philosophy* for Christian living in chapter one, the *pattern* for Christian living in chapter two, the *prize* for Christian living in chapter three and, here in chapter four, we have the *power* for Christian living. The first three would simply be meaningless if there were no dynamic to furnish the power for our ethic. You may have a great philosophy of life, but if you have no power to carry it out, then it's pointless. Well, we have a very definite power available to us to empower and strengthen our new nature! It is almost as if God tacked on the last chapter of this epistle to say, *"P.S. this is really the most important and powerful thing I wanted to say."*

We're going to take an extremely close look at this chapter in our final four reports in Philippians. *"The joy of the Lord is our strength."* That's our main source of power from the Holy Spirit as He lives and speaks through us to others. The secret of our power is prayer. Rest in the sanctuary in the power of the Spirit of God means contemplation of Christ Jesus and meditating on His Word. We are guaranteed satisfaction of power by God Himself when we trust and obey Him. It just doesn't get any better than that! The properly nourished Christian faith will produce stability and complete strength in your life – through unspeakable joy; even during profound suffering. Remember, Paul was in a Roman prison cell awaiting execution.

We aren't going anywhere fast intentionally in this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God. I have also made these reports much shorter than usual, so they're easier to digest. Our last several reports have brought us some almost unbearable truths regarding the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is being revealed in the Word of God; and, friends, our remaining reports are going to cut like a surgeons scalpel. There are certain requirements of and conditions for us in order for the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in our lives. If you haven't read the entire collection of reports from our study of Philippians, I highly suggest you go back and do so now. As Christians, we're a colony from Heaven; and we're making our way back there. Remember, we opened this report by saying, *".... all the way to Heaven is Heaven!"* As we move forward in our safari, we're going to learn that the *"joy of the Lord"* is something we're going to have to honestly evaluate. We're going to have to figure out if serving the Lord Jesus Christ for His cause really brings us joy ~

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