

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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A LIFE THAT LIVES CHRIST

In [Philippians 4:5-9](#) we have the expression of a life that lives Christ. In this booklet we shall see six governing aspects of a life that lives Christ.

Paul gives us these governing aspects in [verse 8](#): “For the rest, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is righteous, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is well-spoken of, if there is any virtue and if any praise, take account of these things.”

WHATEVER IS TRUE

The first governing aspect of a life that lives Christ is “whatever is true.” The word true here means truthful ethically, not merely true in matter of fact. In the expression of a life that lives Christ there can be no falsehood, no lying. Everything we do or say must be truthful. No one who lives Christ should practice falsehood of any kind. A life that is the expression of Christ is a truthful one.

WHATEVER IS HONORABLE

The second aspect is “whatever is honorable.”

The Greek word rendered honorable means venerable, worthy of reverence, noble, grave (1 Tim. 3:8, 11; Titus 2:2), implying the idea of dignity, which inspires and invites reverence. A life that lives Christ will be honorable, noble, grave, solid, weighty, and dignified.

We should not think that only older people should be weighty. All the young people, even the teen-agers, should also have dignity. Even a young brother in junior high school should have dignity, for he has God within him. He is a vessel containing God as his worth, weight, and dignity.

To have dignity is not to act important; it is to live God. A jewelry box containing a diamond ring has dignity not because of the box itself, but because of the diamond. It is the diamond in the box which gives dignity to the box. In like manner, we are a vessel containing Christ. If we live Him, we shall have true dignity. When others see us bearing such a dignity, they will have a deep respect for us. The dignity implied in the Greek word for honorable always inspires a profound respect. This dignity is the second governing aspect of the expression of a life that lives Christ.

WHATEVER IS RIGHTEOUS

In [Philippians 4:8](#) Paul also speaks of “whatever

is righteous.” This refers to what is right (not just) before God and man. Doing what is right is another governing aspect related to the living of Christ.

WHATEVER IS PURE

The word pure in the expression “whatever is pure” means single in intention and action, without any mixture. To be pure in this way is to have no pretense. Purity is also a governing aspect of the life that lives Christ.

WHATEVER IS LOVELY

Yet another governing aspect of such a life is “whatever is lovely.” The word “lovely” means lovable, agreeable, endearing.

WHATEVER IS WELL-SPOKEN OF

Next Paul goes on to mention “whatever is well-spoken of.” This means whatever is of good repute, renowned, attractive, winning, and gracious. The Greek word means sounding well.

In [verse 8](#) Paul does not mention kindness, patience, or holiness. Instead, he mentions six items which are governing aspects of a life that lives Christ. If we live Christ, we shall surely have a life that is an expression of all these aspects. In

our living there will be no falsehood, looseness, or lightness. Instead, our living will be honorable, pure, right, lovely, and well-spoken of. Of the many, many Christian virtues, Paul selected these six as governing aspects.

Here I wish to point out that all human virtues were created by God. According to [Genesis 1:26](#), we were made in God's image. Our human virtues are a vessel made to contain the divine virtues, just as a glove is made in the image of a hand to contain the hand. The Bible reveals that the image of God is Christ ([Col. 1:15](#); [2 Cor. 4:4](#)). Therefore, to say that man was made in the image of God means that he was made according to the form of Christ. Man was created according to Christ so that he could contain Christ and express Him. A glove is designed in the pattern of a hand so that it can contain the hand. Likewise, man was designed by God to bear the pattern of Christ. When Christ comes into a person, that person becomes a vessel containing Christ.

[Romans 9](#) indicates that we are vessels to contain the glory of God. The glory of God denotes the expression of God, and this expression is Christ. Human virtues such as truthfulness, dignity, purity, and loveliness are all aspects of man as a vessel to contain Christ as the reality.

On the basis of Paul's word, "To me to live is Christ" ([Phil. 1:21](#)), we can rightly say that the virtues in [4:8](#) are aspects of the expression of a life that lives Christ. Since Paul himself lived Christ, he certainly would not charge the saints to live something else instead of Christ. Therefore, the virtues he mentions in [4:8](#) must be the expression of the reality lived by Paul and by other saints. This reality is Christ Himself.

Furthermore, in [chapter two](#) we see Christ as the pattern, and in [chapter three](#), the pursuing of Christ with a view to gaining Him. In order to gain Christ, Paul counted all other things as refuse. How then could he exalt human virtues in [chapter four](#)? This is another indication that the virtues in this chapter are not something apart from Christ Himself. Rather, these virtues must be the very expression of the Christ lived by the believers.

If we consider carefully the virtues listed in [4:8](#), we shall have to confess that there is no way for us to live such a life in ourselves. The ethical teachings of Confucius are very high, but they are inferior to Paul's instructions here in Philip-
pians. I studied Confucius' writing entitled *The Highest Learning*, but it cannot compare to the virtues mentioned by Paul. In ourselves it surely

is impossible to have such a life with such an expression. Therefore, we must go on to 4:13, where Paul says, “I can do all things in Him who empowers me.” All the virtues in 4:8 are the expression of the very Christ in whom Paul could do everything. Based on the whole context of the book of Philippians, we can say that the six virtues in 4:8 are the expression of the living of Christ. These are not mere human virtues, not even the virtues developed according to the teachings of Confucius. These virtues are the expression of the very Christ whom we live.

IF ANY VIRTUE AND ANY PRAISE

Toward the end of 4:8 Paul changes his expression and says, “If there is any virtue and if any praise.” The Greek word for virtue here means excellence, that is, ethical energy exhibited in vigorous action. Praise refers to things worthy of praise, as the companion of virtue. The first six items are categorized as “whatever is”; the last two are categorized as “if any.” This indicates that the last two are a summing up of the six foregoing items, in all of which are some virtue or excellence and something worthy of praise.

Virtue and praise are not two additional aspects, but values of the six aspects already

mentioned. Virtue is a general term rather than a specific aspect. There is virtue in truthfulness, dignity, purity, loveliness, rightness, and being well-spoken of. The principle is the same with praise: there is something worthy of praise in all these six aspects of the Christian life.

How excellent is the expression of the life that lives Christ! The six aspects in [verse 8](#) certainly are excellent characteristics of the Christian life. It is excellent to be truthful, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good report. In each of these excellent aspects there is some virtue and something worthy of praise. We should “take account of these things”; that is, we should think on them, ponder them, consider them.

THE THINGS LEARNED, RECEIVED, HEARD, AND SEEN IN THE APOSTLE

In [verse 9](#) Paul concludes, “The things which you have also learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things.” Not only should the believers think on the things mentioned in [verse 8](#); they should also practice the things which they have learned, received, heard, and seen in the apostle. To be sure, Paul lived in such a way as to express all the aspects listed in [verse 8](#). Hence, the believers had learned of

him, had received from him, had heard of him, and had seen certain things in him. For this reason, Paul charged them to follow him in practicing these things.

[Verse 9](#) closes with the word, “And the God of peace shall be with you.” This is both a blessing and a promise. The God of peace is the source of all the things mentioned in [verses 8 and 9](#). By fellowshiping with Him and having Him with us, all these virtues will issue forth in our life.

In [verse 7](#) Paul speaks of the peace of God, and in [verse 9](#), of the God of peace. First he says that the peace of God will guard our hearts and thoughts, then that the God of peace Himself will be with us. Actually the peace of God and the God of peace are one. When God is with us, peace is with us also. The genuine peace we enjoy is God Himself. The way to enjoy the God of peace is by praying to have fellowship with Him.

If we did not have these verses in [Philippians 4](#) concerning the expression of a life that lives Christ, we would not know what kind of life this is. The pattern of such a life was established by the Lord Jesus during the years He lived on earth. If you read the four Gospels carefully, you will see that the Lord lived a life absolutely outside religion, culture, and philosophy. His life was the

full expression of the divine life. This was the reason He could say, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” ([John 14:9](#)), and, “The words which I speak to you, I do not speak from Myself; but the Father who abides in Me, He does His works” ([John 14:10](#)). In His living on earth, the Lord Jesus lived the Father and expressed Him.

The life of the Lord Jesus has set up a pattern for us. If we live according to this pattern, we shall count as loss, even as refuse, all religious, cultural, and philosophical things. Furthermore, we shall count as loss the things of habit, custom, and tradition so that we may be fully occupied by Christ. Then whatever we live out day by day will be Christ and Christ alone.

Human virtues are a vessel to contain Christ as the divine content. We have such virtues as forbearance, truthfulness, and dignity. But these are shadows, not the reality; they are vessels or containers, not the content. The divine forbearance, truthfulness, and dignity are the reality and substance of human forbearance, truthfulness, and dignity. Our virtues are an empty vessel, an empty glove, until Christ comes into us and occupies every part of our being. But after Christ has occupied us inwardly, filling every part of our inner being, then the “glove” is filled with the

living “hand.” A glove without a hand is empty and lifeless. Not only is there nothing living in the glove; there is not even the appearance of livingness. But when the hand gets into the glove, the glove is still the glove, but now it has something living in it. After the hand enters into the glove, the glove begins to have a living expression. In principle, the same is true of our virtues. Unless our virtues are occupied by Christ and express Him, they are empty and devoid of true life. But when they are occupied by the living Christ, they are filled with reality and become His expression.

It is important for us to see the difference between a living that is according to ethical teachings and a living that is the expression of Christ. Probably the best ethical teachings are those of Confucius, who taught people to cultivate, to develop, their human virtues. But it was not possible for Confucius to add anything to people. All he could do was to teach them to develop the virtues they already possessed.

How different this is from God’s economy! God’s economy is not to develop our virtues, but to add Christ to them. When Christ is added to our virtues, they are no longer empty, but are filled with Christ as their content and reality.

Once again, we wish to emphasize the fact that human virtues are a vessel, a container, to express Christ as the real content.

How wonderful it is to realize that [Philippians 4:5-9](#) shows us the clear expression of a life that lives Christ! In this portrait we see that we need the six governing aspects of a life that lives Christ. It is truly marvelous to see these things! Here in Philippians there is a vast territory for us to explore and inexhaustible riches for us to search out and experience.

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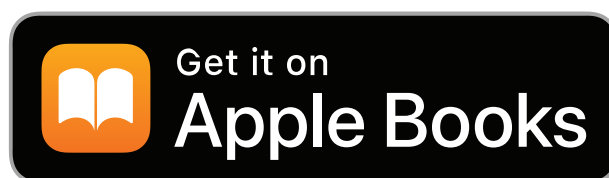
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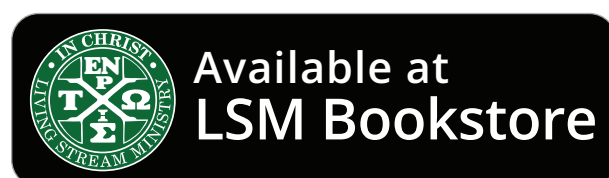
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