



“My God Will...”

Series: Philipians – To Live Is Christ

Philipians 4:19

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The great Protestant reformer of the 16th century, Martin Luther, said, **“The life of Christianity consists of possessive pronouns. It is one thing to say, ‘Christ is a Savior;’ it is quite another thing to say, ‘He is my Savior and Lord.’ The devil can say the first; the true Christian alone can say the second. Take from me the word ‘my’ and you take from me God!”** That is an insightful and spot on statement. The life of Christianity, the true Christian faith, true salvation consists of possessive pronouns, of personal, intimate and real faith. True faith consists in being able to speak of the true God as He is presented in the Bible as “my God, my Christ, my Savior, my Lord.”

With that thought as the foundation this morning, I want us to consider the words of Philipians 4:19 again: **“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philipians 4:19, ESV)** Paul calls the Lord, “my God” and for some of us that kind of speech, that kind of talking about God and Christ, especially in our day, can make us sort of uncomfortable, can’t it. Usually when we hear people talking like this, it just before some spiritually ignorant or heretical statement drops from their lips. You know, the whole “My God would never...” or “my God is (fill-in-the-blank)...” kind of stuff that only goes to prove that their god is a figment of their imagination who has nothing to do with the Holy God of Scripture. Or we think of those pompous folks who give the impression that God belongs to them alone and no one else. This kind of speaking can be kind of off-putting, right? We have all experienced that. But we cannot give into the temptation to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Paul used this kind of speech quite often in his letters. He began the letter to the Romans saying **“First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.” (Romans 1:8, ESV)** To the Corinthians, he wrote,

“I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,” (1 Corinthians 1:4, ESV) Twice already in this letter he has said,

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,” (Philippians 1:3, ESV) And, **“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ” (Philippians 3:8, ESV)**

But Paul didn’t use only singular possessive pronouns to speak of God and of His Christ. Repeatedly – too many times to quote them all – he says things like: **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23, ESV)**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,” (2 Corinthians 1:3, ESV)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,” (Ephesians 1:3, ESV)

“Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.” (Ephesians 6:24, ESV) What we can see very clearly, what we must see very clearly, from Paul’s speech, is that real faith and real salvation in Jesus Christ is deeply possessive thing, whether it is expressed individually or corporately? Whether we speak of God as “my God,” personally, or “our Lord,” collectively – being a Christian is knowing and having God and His Christ as “your God.” Do you see that?

Now we need to understand that when Paul calls the Lord, “my God,” he doesn’t mean that God is his exclusive possession, as if God belongs to Him in a way that no one else can share, like I might speak of “my wife” – clearly he cannot mean that because he speaks of Jesus as “our Savior,” but what he means is that the true God has become his own God in life in a personally experienced sort of way. I know that God is God, and that He reigns over all of the universe **“and no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” (Hebrews 4:13, ESV)** He is God over every human being whether they acknowledge that to be true or not, right? But Paul’s point is

that he knows God and His Christ personally, as His Savior, as His Lord, as His King because He had experienced the salvation and the grace of God personally. And he extends that sort of speech to all of us who know Christ as our Savior and Lord. Paul expects that his experience of God as “my God” would be ours as well.

To Paul, God was not just some philosophical construct, some vague and indistinct notion, some higher power; He was not his imaginary friend, not a figurehead to whom he offered faint praise, nor was He one of the myriad false gods of the Romans, the Greeks, the Canaanites, the Egyptians or modern-day Americans. He is the God who truly is, the God of heaven and earth, God over all, God of holiness, justice, mercy and grace and Paul knew Him personally. He was speaking about the God who had saved his soul, who had transformed the course of his life, who had changed his heart, transformed the way he thought about sin, salvation, people, eternity, and God Himself! The God who had true and real weight in His life.

In fact, these very personal and possessive terms are the kinds of terms in which any true Christian ought to be able to speak, because this is the great and glorious goal of the gospel – to bring us into a personal, intimate, living relationship with God through Jesus Christ – each and every true Christian – and if it does not do that, then I don’t know what it does.

You see, the only way that Paul or anyone can sincerely call the Lord, “my God” is to know and believe that he belongs to God, to know and believe that God loves him, to know and believe beyond the shadow of a doubt that he has been fully forgiven by God and to know and believe that God is for him, to do him good. God had set His saving love on Paul; He had set him apart for Himself; He had poured His mercy and grace out upon Paul. Paul belongs to God and he knows it and so he can speak of him, with no awkwardness or sheepishness as “my God.” In fact, I want us to think of all that God did to make Paul His own.

What God Has Done to Make Paul His Own

Think about everything that God had to do to make Paul His own. We all know about Paul, right? This was a guy who murdered Christians, a proud, egocentric and self-made man. By

his own admission in this very letter, Paul was an arrogant fool. He says: ***“though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”*** (Philippians 3:4–6, ESV) He was a racist, a bigot, a proud man, a religious self-righteous man, a proud traditionalist, a zealous persecutor of the church. To his way of thinking, he was the most perfect man who ever lived, but he was profoundly blind and horribly mistaken and he was fit, not for God’s praise but for His eternal condemnation in hell.

Paul was running headlong toward hell and God had to chase Him down, had to break his stubborn will, had to open his blinded eyes, had to awaken and soften his dead and calloused heart, had to make him see his desperate need. Paul would later write, ***“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*** (2 Corinthians 4:6, ESV) That’s exactly what God had to do.

We all know how that happened. Paul testifies to the events in several places. Let me read you the account from Acts 22: ***““As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ And I answered, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. And I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.’ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. “And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me, and standing by me said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. And he said, ‘The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’”*** (Acts 22:6–16, ESV)

Paul had to be pursued by God, must be sought after by God. His heart had to be rent by the Spirit of God. Charles Spurgeon says: **Heart-rending is divinely wrought—and solemnly felt. It is a secret grief which is personally experienced, not in mere form—but as a deep, soul-moving work of the Holy Spirit upon the inmost heart of each believer. It is not a matter to be merely talked of—but keenly and sensitively felt in every living child of the living God. It is powerfully humiliating and sin-purging! But also, it is sweetly preparative for those gracious consolations which proud unhumiliated souls are unable to receive! This heart-rending distinctly belongs to the elect of God—and to them alone.**

God pursued Paul to save him – we can see that in the course and circumstances of Paul’s life. We can see that in what Paul says here. He did the same for all of us who are truly His. But we need to understand that for Paul, as for all of us, Paul’s salvation and your salvation, is not a matter of luck or a matter of good sense on your part, but of divine purpose and planning.

To the Ephesians, Paul speaks of this. He wrote: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight.”** (Ephesians 1:3–8, ESV) Paul’s salvation – and he knew this – and God’s pursuit of Paul to save Him was all a part of God’s divine and eternal plan centering on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to save for Himself, out of the world of sinners, those upon whom He had set His love and chosen for Himself before the foundation of the world, before anything existed.

What had God done to save Paul? To save all who belong to Him? In eternity, He had set His unchanging and eternal love upon Paul and every Christian. He had marked out the plan for his life, for every Christian’s life – that’s the word “predestined” and, in time and space, He gave His own Son, to save sinners – to redeem Paul and every Christian -- from the power and tyranny of sin, to grant forgiveness to Paul and every Christian – out of His grace, because of His love. **“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person**

one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.” (Romans 5:6–10, ESV) Paul understood all that God, out of His immeasurable love, had done to make Paul his own. He understood that very well, but that leads to the question of

What Paul Had Done to Make the Lord His Own

How did Paul have to respond to everything that God has done in Christ? Beloved, he had to believe the truth. He had to personally and sincerely and earnestly lay hold of these truths for himself. He had to believe: “This God alone can save me. He commands my allegiance and my faith. This God, in His Son, has endured the wrath on the cross of Calvary that my sins deserve. This God has reconciled Himself to me by the death and resurrection of Christ. This God is calling me to light and life. This God will protect and preserve me and present me faultless before the presence of his glory in that great day. This is the God who has pursued me with His love that I do not deserve to give me what I cannot demand.”

It was not good enough to believe that the gospel offer of life is true. It was not good enough to believe in some vague manner that “God is love.” It was not good enough to hear salvation offered to him. People hear and believe these sorts of vague and indistinct things all the time and still go to hell.

Paul had to take it for himself. He had to believe it for himself and he did. Paul made that God his very own God, and this Savior his very own Savior, and this Lord His very own Lord. This is a love that demands our response. This is a love that we have to know and experience as our own. Here is a love we have to respond to. Here is a love to taste and feel. No one here or anywhere in the world will ever perish because God is not love. But they will perish because they do not respond to this love. This is a love; this is a gospel that calls for a response.

Paul responded. In his heart, he was convinced. “This God, whose Son is the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be my God.” And he served his God faithfully. The Lord Jesus Christ mastered his life. He lived for His glory and to bring the Lord pleasure and joy, He lived to make His name and His gospel known. It was His delight to spend His life for His sake. He belonged to this God and he pursued his fame with steadfast humility and devotion. He was convinced that the words of Ephesians 2:8-10 were true of Himself and every other Christian in the world for all time: **“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”** (Ephesians 2:8–10, ESV)

Can you say of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, “He is my God” and that the evidence and the course of my life bear this out? Because this is where every Christian life consciously and deliberately and intentionally begins, with the committed and irrevocable conviction, “God is my God. In Him alone will I trust.” No matter our specific circumstances, if we are truly Christians, like Paul, God had to pursue us, had to seek after us, had to rend our hearts by showing us our need for Christ, and then, like Paul, we had to respond in faith. And when we respond in faith to the true God, who has revealed Himself to us, “God is my God, Christ is my Lord, He is mine and I am His.” God becomes in our experience our God in a way that He is not to those who do not know Him and therefore are not covered by His grace. It is not arrogance to say that, but the gracious, humbling, worship-inspiring truth. A truth that should make us long for every person that we know to be able, by God’s saving grace, to say the same. That was the confession of Paul’s soul and what he found in his God was priceless.

What Paul Had Found in “My God”

Think about this with me, especially in light of this statement that Paul makes in verse 19: **“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”** (Philippians 4:19, ESV) That is a pretty bold statement, isn’t it? That statement encompasses a great deal – not only material needs, but **“every”** need, every possible need that you can think of. That is pretty bold statement to make, but Paul had no problem making it because of all that He had found in God, expressed in His Son, Jesus Christ. What had Paul found in His God, in His Christ?

Certainly he found, as we have said already, all his salvation, his justification and reconciliation and adoption as a child in to the family of God. Standing on no other ground than the name of Christ, having no other plea for his salvation than Jesus and His blood and righteousness, Paul was content to be forgiven and be accepted by God, as a beggar saved by grace. But he found even more than that. He found in Christ all the mysteries of God's will and His ways, and all the wonders of His character to satisfy His heart and soul for a lifetime. When he stood before kings and princes, before congregations and mobs, he found a strength and a power in Christ he could find nowhere else. When he suffered hardship and trial, bereavement and loss, opposition, when he was tied to the whipping post, when he was in need, or anxious, he found a comfort and a peace in Christ, a power to endure and to persevere that the world could never offer, a provision for his physical and spiritual needs that was full. The Philippians themselves had been the instrument that God had used to provide some of Paul most basic needs. He found in Christ the power to overcome still indwelling sin, the grace and sufficiency to grow more and more into Christ's image, the strength and will to be obedient to His commands, the courage to be faithful in the face of confrontation, the hope of eternal life that encouraged and refreshed his heart, inner joy that buoyed his soul, inner stability and strength, a proper perspective and balance, an inner satisfaction, and a love that did not and would not let him go. He found ***“all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.”*** (2 Corinthians 1:20, ESV)

Paul could write and say: ***“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*** (Romans 8:31–39, ESV)

Paul wrote these words and he meant them all, because He found in his God and in his Christ, the very things for which his soul longed. His God had truly supplied all of his needs – material and spiritual – and if His God had done all of this for Him, it was with great confidence that he could say that God would do all this and more for the Philippian believers who knew Him in the same way and be sure that it was true. And all of this, beloved, brings us

Back to the Matter of Personal, Possessive Pronouns

Can you say of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, “He is my God”? Because, again, this is where every Christian life consciously and deliberately and intentionally begins, with the committed and irrevocable conviction, “God is my God. In Him alone will I trust.”

Following God and being a child of God is far more than a moment in time transaction where you confess faith in Christ with no further desire to follow Him and know Him, no desire to seek him or desire for your life and your obedience to be pleasing to Him. Being gripped by God’s grace, truly being made a child of God by the mercy of God, truly knowing Christ as our Savior to the glory of God should not cause us to say, “I’m good. Let’s move on.” On the contrary, it ought to make us say – “I want more of Christ, I want to know Him better. I want to seek Him more and see Him more and know Him more.” It did for Paul. ***“Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way...”***

(Philippians 3:13–15a, ESV) JI Packer said: **“There is great incentive to worship and love God in the thought that, for some unfathomable reason, he wants me as his friend, and desires to be my friend, and has given his Son to die for me in order to realize this purpose.”** I agree with him whole-heartedly. It is this fact, perhaps more than any other, that motivates my personal desire to be able to say with complete confidence, “Christ is my God and in Him I trust alone.”

Beloved, a religion that is practically devoid of Christ, that is not personal in nature, is worthless. Can I tell you beloved, there are far too many church members, baptized men and women, who really know nothing of Christ, who find no real treasure in Christ, who do

not know what it is to consciously walk and live, and trust in a depend upon Christ, who find it very odd to speak of the Lord in such personal and possessive ways. Their religion consists of vague and indistinct notions about God and Jesus. Their beliefs consist of no more than the thought that they are “no worse than other people and better than some,” that “God is love and loving God would never send anyone to hell.” They may go to church and try to “do good and harm no one,” and they hope that their “good will outweigh their bad.” But the truths of the gospel – Christ’s blood and righteousness – and the thought that the biblical God is “my God and I am His” because of what Christ has done and because of personal, committed and irrevocable conviction about and trust in Christ alone is absolutely foreign to them. They do not live a daily life of faith and trust in Christ for all things.

I don’t want that for us, not for any of us. JC Ryle wrote: **Let us take heed that our faith be a faith of the heart as well as of the head. Let us see that our knowledge has a sanctifying influence on our affections and our lives. Let us not only know Christ but love Him, from a sense of actual benefit received from Him. Let us not only believe that He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world, but rejoice in Him, and cleave to Him with purpose of heart. Let us not only be acquainted with Him by the hearing of the ear, but by daily personal application to Him for mercy and grace. "The life of Christianity," says Luther, "consists in possessive pronouns."**

My prayer for all of us is that we can with full hearted agreement and complete sincerity and integrity, echo the prayer of David in Psalm 63, where he says:

“O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night; for you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.” (Psalm 63:1–8, ESV)

Let’s pray

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