

Phil 2:4

For BETTER or for WORSE

PRELIMS. The term 'For better or for worse' is a familiar phrase because it is used in **marriage** vows! It is **not** a Biblical term. But it most definitely is a Biblical **concept**! It is really just another word for **commitment**! It means that once we make a promise, **no matter what happens**, whether things get better, or things get worse, we **keep** the **promise** we have made! If marriage, we stick with one another - no matter what happens; if we have signed a contract, we stick by the conditions and full term - unless there had been death or some other **legitimate severing**. Contracts, promises, vows are supposed to be a means of **security** and **guarantee** for the future! So we know where we are! A contract, a covenant, a promise, a vow all **bind** us to the conditions and terms of the deal!

Now tonight I want to speak on this subject of 'For Better or for Worse' in relation to **Xnity**! We take **Christ** as our Lord and Master - for life - for better or for worse. It can and **is** worse for a lot of Xns! How strengthening and encouraging to read about our **persecuted** brethren in other countries, where many Xns are **tortured** for their faith in Jesus, and yet do not deny the faith. They are **uncomplaining** about it. They knew it would happen. For them, it is **worth** it - X is **precious** and they have much **more** of His love than ever before.

Like every Xn, these persecuted Xns have **made** a **choice**! They have **chosen**, to be under the **Lordship** of Jesus Christ. He is their King and Lord. His commands are **important** to them and so are to be kept. **APP** That is the **position** of **every** Xn. Every Xn has made a profession to live under X's rule in His kingdom, under His laws - **no matter** what happens! For better or for worse. That is commitment.

We live in an age when marriage promises, managers of **football clubs**, etc, make promises and **sign forms** of commitment for life in the case of marriage, for a number of years in the case of managers, but it seems to be **meaningless**! For, as soon as some difficulty arises, or some better offer comes along, or a more suitable partner appears, ways and means are found to **negate** the **contract**! 'For better or for worse', 'goes out the window', and is **meaningless**!

APP Sadly, it is **not** much different for the **Church** - many Xns who profess to be under the banner of Jesus Christ, are **not committed** to Him. Jesus Himself put it this way “*when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the Word, immediately they fall away*” [Mar 4:17] We live today in a **culture** that determines almost everything by **material** gain or **personal** preference! We live in a ‘**me**’ **culture**, whatever pleases me, whatever suits me will be done. We are actually a very **selfish/selfcentred** culture. That’s what’s behind many family break-ups - it is **not** ‘for better or for worse’ but what’s best **for ‘me’!** As a nation and Xn community, we need to get back to realising this!

What a **contrast** to Jesus Christ! He came to this earth to fulfill a **covenant** (made with His Father). It too was ‘For better or for Worse’. (**He nearly caved-in** at one point - but He didn’t - because He was **faithful!**) He certainly did **not** live a self-centered life! He lived **for** everyone else! He did **not** consider, Himself, His needs, His feelings, His dignity, when contemplating the needs of others.

*“Christ Jesus...who, though He was in the form of God...made himself **nothing**, taking the form of a **servant**...born in the likeness of men...being found in human form, He **humbled** Himself by becoming obedient to the point of **death**, even death on a cross”* [Phil 2:5-8].

Thus Paul’s appeal, “*Let each of you **look not** only to his **own interests**, but also to the interests of **others***” [Phil 2:4]

Now, it was not simply death that Christ endured. Death itself is the **contradiction** of God. God is uncreated, eternal, life-generating, in and of Himself. But Christ experienced, by His own choice, for the sake of His people, the death **of the Cross!** Death itself was awful for Him, but the death of the Cross, was indescribably **more awful!**

Death was completely **alien** to Christ! Death is **not alien** to you or I! We have the **seeds** of death within us! “*just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin...so death spread to **all men** because all sinned...**death reigned** from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam*” [Rom 5:12-14]! You and I experience the **seeds** of ‘death’ in all the **miseries** of **this life**. Paul said “*I die **daily***” and Jesus asked

us to take up the “*cross daily*”[1Cor 15:31 & Luke 9:23]! Every problem and every pain we experience is the working of death. Paul confirmed this “*we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake...So death is at work in us*”[2Cor 4:11,12]

When Christ made a decision, the choice was **not**, ‘What is best for Me?’, but ‘What is best for **them!**’ ‘What is best for My flock, what is best for My sheep?’! Unlike our marriages and our contracts which we sign up to, Christ **knew exactly** what He was signing up to! We really do not know what we are signing up to! And if we did, how many of us would sign up? But Christ knew exactly and **carried on** “*so that you by His poverty might become rich*”[2Cor 8:9] Christ knew that it was **not** ‘For better or for worse’! He **knew** it was for **worse!** There was no possibility of ‘better’ for Him. But of course there **was** a ‘better’, but the better was for **us believers!**

In a covenant and contract of course, there **is** a reward - if the terms are kept. X’s reward was the **salvation** of His **unworthy people!** Believe it or not, the salvation of His people was the “*hope that was set before Him*” which enabled Him to **endure** the Cross! Your salvation is what enabled Him to persevere with all the pain and suffering of the Cross! Imagine **that** sustaining Him! What love!

But He had a completely **different view of salvation** from you/I! For Jesus, salvation meant the **defeat** of **all evil/sin**. Plus one other very important matter. Salvation meant the **Father’s greater glory!** God is glorified in **whatever** goes in His creation - for He ordained it so. “*the whole earth is full of His glory*”[Isa 6:3] That was said when 90%+ of the earth was in **pagan idolatry!** Everything God does is glorious in some sense but some things **shine brighter** than others. The Bible says there is a glory that **excels** all other glories of God! Listen how Paul puts it “*what once had glory has come to have **no glory at all**, because of the glory that surpasses it*”[2Cor 3:10] The Met Psalms “over all His other works His **tender mercies** are”!!

That is why Jesus could say at the end of His life on earth and as He faced the Cross “*glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You.....I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave*

Me to do”[John 17:4] God is never more glorified than when He is saving sinners from their sins. Sin spoiled everything - in heaven and on earth. I am sure it is **not heresy** to say that something happened in **heaven** at the Fall of man. A ‘**gloom**’ as it were, came into heaven. We read of heaven being **shaken** several times in the Bible. Of course at the time of the Fall there were **no humans** in heaven, only **angels** were there! The angels do **respond** to earthly events We read that there is **joy** in heaven when one sinner repents!

But that ‘gloom’ was to be **dispersed** through X’s work! As the prophet Isaiah describes it “*behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered*”[Isa 65:17] The angels would have rejoiced when that was announced and a **promise** and **covenant** had been made for man’s redemption and a glory that excels all other glories! And what enabled the angels to rejoice was that **this covenant** was **safe** in the hands of Jesus, as the Psalmist wrote “*My covenant will stand fast with Him*”[Psa 89:28] He would fulfill the covenant ‘For better or for Worse’!

Therefore we have X’s prayer in Gethsemane “*the hour has come*” the hour of all hours, when man’s redemption will be sealed! And so He prayed “*glorify Me... with the glory that I had with You before the world existed*”[John 17:5] Christ as the 2nd Person of the Trinity experienced glory **before** He came to this earth, before man sinned and ‘spoiled’ that glory. But Christ can now pray ‘**Restore** that glory we had before mankind fell by sinning’!

When you and I talk and consider salvation, our thoughts are inclined to be **limited** to **personal interests**! But Christ has shown us that salvation is a **far bigger** matter than the salvation of human beings - important though that is! But in **reality** God’s **glory/honour** and the defeat of evil is the highest and most important aspect of salvation.

It is so fascinating, that the **angels** want to **look into** this subject! “*It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you... through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look*”[1P1:12]