Philippians - Commentaries by Hamilton Smith

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Christ Our Object

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If the second chapter has brought Christ before us in His lowly path, as the pattern for our walk, the third chapter presents Christ in glory as the One to whom we are pressing on. God sets before us Christ in glory as the perfect Object of our souls, and tells us that we are called on high to be with Him and like Him. With this bright prospect before us, we can forget the things that are behind, rise above the sorrows of the present, and reach forth to those things that are before.

In the light of the eternal glory that lies before us, present things lose their value, and the sorrows by the way are seen to be but for a moment. Compared with the coming glory, the things which are gain in the flesh are counted by the Apostle not only as valueless, but as dung. Having seen their worthlessness, he not only leaves them behind, but he forgets them. He says, as it were, "They are not worth talking about, even to condemn: I forget them" (vs. 13).

Christ had laid hold of Paul for the express purpose of having the Apostle like Him and with Him in the glory, and Paul says, "The one thing I desire is to lay hold of Christ in glory – the prize that awaits me at the end of the journey."

Blessed for all believers to know, young and old, that if we have not yet laid hold of Christ in the glory, Christ has laid hold of us, and He which hath begun a good work will perform it unto the end. No matter how rough the road, how many the trials, how deep the sorrows, how powerful the enemy, Christ will not let us go. He is "able even to subdue all things unto Himself," so will at last have us like Him and with Him in the glory.

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Christ Our Hope

The Apostle looks up to heaven and sees Christ in the glory, and realizes that believers are going to be conformed to the image of His Son in glory. It is possible to walk as He walked and, in this sense to be morally like Christ even now, but to be conformed to His image, we must wait for the coming glory. We are still in these bodies of humiliation, subject to sickness and want, and exposed to dangers and death.

How then are we to be delivered from these bodies of humiliation? We look at Christ in heaven and we see we are going to be like Him: our conversation – the home of our affections – is in heaven, and to heaven we look for the change of these bodies. "From which also," writes the Apostle, "we await the Lord Jesus Christ [as] Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory" (JND).

Once, He came as Saviour to deliver us from our sins and judgment, by His death on the cross. A second time He is coming as Saviour to deliver us from these bodies of humiliation.

One thing remains to effect this great change – the coming of Christ. Christ is our hope, and at His coming, what we have looked forward to in hope, will be accomplished in glory. In the twinkling of an eye we shall be like Christ and with Christ.

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, One Thing I Do

Turning now to the third chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians we find in the Apostle one who, above all others, answered to the three tests that the Lord set before the rich young ruler. He gave up earthly possessions, he took up the cross, and he followed Christ.

First, what were the possessions that he gave up? Like the young ruler, Paul was marked by creature excellencies and worldly advantages in no small degree. He was well born, he was freeman of no mean city, he was highly educated, he was intensely zealous in his religion, and as touching the law he was blameless.

All these circumstances and qualities combined to give him a great place in this world. But there came a day when, like the rich young man, he came in touch with Christ. Then came the test. Could he give up all that was an advantage to him as a man in this world – all those things which made something of Paul – in order that he might make everything of Christ? Let us remember that neither the rich young ruler, nor the "young man ... whose name was Saul," was asked to give up the things of shame. All realize that we cannot follow Christ and go on with the hidden things of shame. Such things we are glad enough to leave behind. The test was, and is: can worldly advantages, human zeal, and blameless character, natural birth, religious reputation, be left behind as an object so that henceforth, instead of self, Christ may become the one Object of the life?

Instead of turning away grieved from Christ and going back to his great possessions, like the rich ruler, Paul forgot "those things which are behind" and reached forth unto Christ. He saw the glory of Christ, and he saw Christ in the glory. The rich ruler came in contact with Christ, but apparently, in spite of all His wonderful miracles, he saw in Christ only a good Man; he did not see the glory of Christ. This made the great difference between these two young men. Paul saw the glory of Christ with the immediate result that all the glory of this world – all those things which were gain to him as a man in the flesh – were counted loss for Christ. He did not belittle these natural advantages: on the contrary, he reckoned them up, and having done so he counted them loss when compared with the glory of Christ. His natural excellencies were eclipsed by the "excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" his Lord.

Secondly, there was not only what he gave up, but what he took up. In all truth he took up the cross. His one desire, as he passed through this world, was to be "made conformable unto His death" – the death of Christ. If Christ had died to the world, then Paul would have done with the world. For Paul the cross not only ended himself as a man in the flesh, but it forever closed to him this present evil world.

Thirdly, having given up all his natural advantages as the object of his life and having taken up the cross which closed the world, he followed Christ as the one Object of his life. He turned his back on all earthly religion; he went outside the camp unto Christ, bearing His reproach. Henceforth Christ was his one Object, for he can say:

"For me to live is Christ" (1:21);

"That I may win Christ" (3:8);

"Be found in Him" (3:9); and

"That I may know Him" (3:10).

Here, then, was a man who could say in all truth, the one thing that the ruler lacked, the "one thing" that Martha had to learn is needful, is the "ONE THING I DO." Henceforth his life was a life of single-hearted devotedness to Christ. For him Christ was the one supreme Object – not sinners, not saints, not service – but Christ. No one was ever more zealous in preaching the gospel of the grace of God to sinners, no one ever cared for all the Churches like the Apostle, no one was more untiring in service; but above all, and before all, Christ was his one Object. He did not lack the "one thing" like the ruler; he was not distracted by "many things" like Martha. He had before him one thing – to follow Christ. Thus it was he forgot "those things which are behind" and reached forth unto "those things which are before."

Moreover he lets us know what these things are. He shows us very clearly that they all center in Christ.

First, Christ in the glory (2:9-10).

Secondly, the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus (3:14 JND).

Thirdly, the coming of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (3:20).

Fourthly, being "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (3:21).

How good then to make Christ our one Object. If we make service our object, we shall end in seeking to exalt ourselves. If we make sinners our object, we shall in all probability be drawn back into the world. If we make saints our object, they will break our hearts. But if Christ is our first and supreme Object, we shall, like the Apostle, fight a good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith, for Christ alone can hold our feet in the narrow path, guide us through every difficulty, and sustain us in the presence of every opposition. May we then in our little measure, be able to say with the Apostle, "One thing I do, ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:13-14).

May we then in our little measure, be able to say with the Apostle, "One thing I do, ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Christian Truth: Volume 26, Seven Exhortations

Phil. 4:1-9

The first nine verses of the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Philippians bring before us the seven closing exhortations of the epistle. These exhortations were never more important and comforting than in these last difficult days.

The day of grace draws to its close. Evils within and without oppose us. To meet these different trials we have the encouragement of these seven exhortations, which, if taken to heart and carried out, will lift us above the sorrows of the way and guide us through every trial.

1) "Stand fast in the Lord" (v. 1). This great exhortation brings before us our resource in the presence of every kind of opposition. When the Apostle gave us this word, he himself was in bonds -the prisoner of the Lord. Within the Christian circle he was opposed by jealous men who were even preaching Christ out of envy, strife, and contention, seeking to arouse tribulation for him (chap. 1:15, 16). Outside it adversaries were plotting for his life (chap. 1:28).

Nevertheless, he is not cast down or overcome by one or the other. Do professors seek to add to his afflictions by preaching out of envy? Then, at least, he can rejoice that Christ is preached. Do adversaries seek his life? He is not terrified.

What then sustained him, and enabled him to stand unshaken in the presence of every opposition? It was this—his confidence was entirely in the Lord—in a word, he stood fast in the Lord. And having experienced the sustaining grace and support of the Lord, he passes on the exhortation to the saints of all ages. In the presence of every opposition we may have to meet, he says, "Stand fast in the Lord."

The adversaries without, and the "envy," "strife," and "contention" within the Christian circle, that existed even in the Apostle's day, have increased on every hand in our day. Yet we have this comforting exhortation, "Stand fast in the Lord."

We are neither exhorted nor expected to stand fast in our own strength or knowledge or wisdom. We are to stand fast against every effort of the enemy to further break up and divide the people of God, whether from within or without, by standing fast in the strength of the Lord, the living Lord who is exalted above every name, and is "able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (chap. 2:9; 3:21).

"Be of the same mind in the Lord." (v. 2). Nothing is more distressing to the heart and enfeebling to testimony than the differences of judgment that exist among the true people of God. In the second chapter of the epistle the Apostle traces all envy and strife to this one root—"vainglory" (chap. 2:3). Even in the very presence of the Lord there was a strife among the apostles, because each wanted to be

accounted the greatest (Luke 22:24). So in the Apostle's day there was strife as the result of the vainglory of some who wanted to be great. And in our day, all the division and strife that has come in among the people of God can be traced to this one root—someone wanted to be great.

The vainglorious man will ever be an envious man—jealous of every one that is more spiritual or more gifted than himself. And jealousy expresses itself in malice, and malice ends in strife (Jas. 3:14-16).

How then can we "be of the same mind in the Lord"? The Apostle clearly shows that this can only be as we are marked by "lowliness of mind," and to have the lowly mind, he says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." His was the lowly mind that led Him to make Himself of no reputation in order to serve others in love. Self likes to be served, and thinks it is exalted when being served by others; but love delights to serve.

If then we each forget self, refuse to seek a reputation for ourselves, and seek only to serve others in love, according to the lowly mind of Christ, we shall have the mind of the Lord, and "be of the same mind in the Lord."

"Rejoice in the Lord always" (v. 4). The Apostle has been telling us that within the Christian circle there are some marked by envy, strife, and contention (chap. 1); that all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's (chap. 2); and that many walk in such a way that they are enemies of the cross of Christ (chap. 3). Alas! these things are still found among the people of God, and may well call forth sorrow and tears, even as they did with him.

But the Apostle tells us more; he not only looks abroad and sees the failure of the saints, but he looks up and sees the glory of Jesus. He sees Christ in the glory, the prize of the calling on high (chap. 3:14). He sees that God has called us to be with Christ and like Christ in glory, and he sees the blessed end of the wilderness journey with all its sorrows and failure. With this glorious end in view, he forgets the things that are behind and presses on to the goal.

Moreover, he not only looks up to Christ in the glory, but he looks for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to change our bodies of humiliation into bodies of glory. Looking around he may weep; but looking up and looking on, he rejoices, and exhorts us to "Rejoice in the Lord always."

We cannot rejoice in ourselves, our service, or our walk; we cannot always rejoice in our circumstances or in the saints. But with the living Christ on high, and the coming Christ before us, we can "Rejoice in the Lord always."

4) "Let your gentleness be known of all men. The Lord is near" (vv. 5, 6; J.N.D. Trans.). It is only as we walk with the Lord before us, according to the first three exhortations, that we shall be able to carry out this exhortation which sets before us the character of gentleness by which we should be known of all men. Too often we are known for our self-assertiveness, for our strong opinions, and perhaps violence of expression, in relation to the affairs of this world. If our minds are set on things above, we shall not be eager to assert ourselves in regard to things on earth. As to these matters we do well to yield to others and be reticent of asserting our opinions. Thus we shall wear the beautiful character of Christ who was marked by "meekness and gentleness" (2 Cor. 10:1). We are to beware of being drawn into strife with those who may oppose, for "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men" (2 Tim. 2:24). Let us remember it is more important to exhibit the character of Christ than to assert our opinions, even if right, or to defend ourselves. Men can oppose our opinions, our assertions, and our violence; but who can stand against gentleness? As one has said, "Gentleness is irresistible."

Moreover, to encourage us to gentleness, the Apostle reminds us that "The Lord is near." There is no need for us to assert ourselves and seek to put the world right, for the coming of the Lord is near; and at His coming He will right every wrong.

May we not also say that in another sense the Lord is near to us, however little we may realize His presence. He hears and sees all that we say and do. How many a hard and violent word we may have uttered in unguarded moments, that would never have been said had we realized His presence.

The disciples in their hardness rebuked the mothers who brought their little ones to Jesus. The Lord in His gentleness said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me." Again, the disciples in their resentment against villagers that refused to receive the Lord, would with violence bring down fire from heaven to destroy them. The Lord in His gentleness utters no word against His rejecters, but quietly passes on to another village.

May we then so speak and act while pursuing a separate path, so that if the world takes any account of us, it will only be to mark our "gentleness."

5) "Be careful for nothing" (v. 6). Here the Apostle's exhortation has in view the circumstances of life. He is not unmindful that in a world of sorrow and sickness, of want and care, there will be trials to face and burdens to be borne; but, he would not have us racking our poor hearts with them. He himself writes from a prison, and had suffered want, and a companion and fellow laborer had been sick nigh unto death; but in these sorrowful circumstances he had been lifted above all anxious care, and therefore can say to others, "Be careful for nothing."

We may have to face trials in our families, trials in our businesses, trials among the Lord's people; sorrows from sickness, sorrows from want, sorrows from the saints, that press upon us a great burden and, as one has said, "How often a burden possesses a person's mind, and when he tries in vain to cast it off, it comes back and worries him."

How then can he find relief? How is it possible to "Be careful for nothing"? Very blessedly the Apostle unfolds the way to be free, not necessarily of the trial, but of the burden of the trial, so that it no longer weighs the spirit down with care and anxiety. He says, "In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Thus only shall we find relief. "In everything," whatever the trial may be, small or great, make it known to God in prayer, and tell God exactly what you wish; "Let your requests be made known unto God." The requests may not be for our good, they may not be according to the mind of God; they may even be foolish, but we are to make them known to God.

What will be the result? Will He answer the requests? Will He remove the trial? He may see that to answer the request or remove the trial would not be for our good. So far as the immediate trial is concerned, He will act in perfect wisdom for our good, according to His perfect love. But this God will do; He will relieve our hearts from the burden of the trial. If we pour out our hearts before Him, He will pour in His peace into

our hearts—that peace of God which passes all understanding.

So Hannah found in the days of old when in her sore trial she would say, "I... have poured out my soul before the LORD." In result we read, "Her countenance was no more sad." And yet, at the time, her circumstances were just the same. Afterward, indeed, the Lord changed her circumstances; but first He showed that He had the power to change Hannah. From grief of heart and bitterness of soul she was brought into great peace—the peace of God which passes all understanding—through making known her requests to God (1 Sam. 1:6-18).

6) "Think on these things" (v. 8). Rejoicing in the Lord, and set free from care, we shall be able peacefully to delight our souls in the things that are pure and praiseworthy. In a world far from God we are continually faced with evil. It is in us and around us; it presses upon us from every side.

At times we have to face it and deal with it in ourselves, or others; but, even so, to have to do with evil in any form is defiling and soiling to the mind. Alas! there is often with us a tendency to pry into evil, and to be over-busy in contending against it!

God would have us to find our delight in all that is true and noble and just and pure. The flesh in us is ever ready to listen to slander, and bad reports, and things that are vicious and blameworthy. But, says the Apostle, listen to the good report; and if there is anything virtuous and praiseworthy in your brother, "think on these things."

7) "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you." v. 9.

The mind being set on things which are pure will prepare the way for a life that is according to God. Right thinking will lead to right doing. Having said of the things that are pure, "think on these things," the Apostle now says, "Those things, which ye have... seen in me, do."

It is not enough to have "learned" and "received" the truth through the Apostle's writings, or to have "heard" it from his lips and "seen" it in his life. What we have learned, and received, and heard, and seen, is to be translated into our lives. We are, as another apostle has said, to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (Jas. 1:22).

Then, says the Apostle, if our minds are set on things that are pure, and our lives are in accordance with the truth—if we "think" and "do" rightly—we shall find that not only the peace of God keeps our hearts, but that the God of peace will be with us.

In spite then of all the failure of the Church, and the trials by the way, how blessed the portion of those believers who

Stand fast in the Lord;

Have the same mind in the Lord;

Rejoice in the Lord;

Who are known of all men for their gentleness;

Who are careful for nothing;

Who have their minds set on things that are pure, and

Who, in practice, "do" the things they have learned and received.

Such will have their hearts governed by the peace of God, and will enjoy the support of the God of peace. In all these exhortations there is nothing that cannot be carried out by the simplest and youngest believer, in the power of the Holy Spirit. They demand no special gift; they require no great intellectual attainment. They form the very essence of practical Christian life, and are as applicable in these last difficult days as in the early days of freshness and power.

"Thus ever on through life we find, To trust, O Lord, is best;Who serve Thee with a quiet mind, Find in Thy service rest.Their outward troubles may not cease,But this their joy will be-Thou wilt keep him in perfect peaceWhose mind is stayed on Thee."

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Christ Our Strength

It is blessed to look back and see the grace of Christ in His lowly life. It is blessed to look up, and see Christ in the glory, as the one glorious Object before our souls. It is blessed to look on, and see that Christ is coming to conform us to His image. Nevertheless, as we look around we are faced with the circumstances by the way – prosperous circumstances that may make us careless and self-satisfied, or trying circumstances by which we may be cast down and dissatisfied. How then can we be lifted above our circumstances, be they bright or sad?

To answer this question, the Apostle gives us his own experience. He had known what it was to be in want as well as in prosperity: he had been full, and he had hungered; he had enjoyed plenty and he had suffered need. But in all circumstances he had found his support in Christ. So he could write, "I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power" (JND).

In circumstances of weakness the Lord had said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9). Therefore Paul had learned, in whatsoever state he was, to be content.

That Christ was his strength, was not merely an absolute truth to which he assented, but a truth that he had learned by experience. Through the strength of Christ he was made superior to all circumstances, be they bright or sad.

We may say Christ can do this for all saints, and it is true. But Paul says, as it were, "He has done it for me, for I have learned by experience that I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Thus, with Christ before his soul as his Life, his Pattern, his Object, his Hope, and his Strength, the Apostle entered into all the blessed experiences that are proper to a Christian in the power of the Holy Spirit, and this in spite of so much in his circumstances that was sorrowful and heart breaking.

Seeing that Christ remains, and that Christ is the Same (Heb. 1:11-12), it is still possible, amidst the gathering gloom of these closing days, for the simplest believer to enjoy this same true Christian experience – this joy in the Lord, confidence in the Lord, peace in the midst of trials, love that flows out to the saints, hope that looks for the coming of Christ, and faith that counts upon His support to lift us above every trial by the way.

The Epistle to the Philippians is the epistle of Christian experience, for therein is presented in a very touching way the experience of a believer who lives the Christian life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Seven Exhortations

The first nine verses of the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians bring before us the seven closing exhortations of the Epistle. These exhortations were never more important, and comforting, than in these last difficult days.

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The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Stand Fast in the Lord

This great exhortation brings before us our resource in the presence of every kind of opposition. When the Apostle gave us this word, he, himself, was in bonds – the prisoner of the Lord. Within the Christian circle he was opposed by jealous men who were even preaching Christ out of envy, strife, and contention seeking to "arouse tribulation" for him (1:15-16 JND). Outside it, adversaries were plotting for his life (1:28).

Nevertheless, he is not cast down nor overcome by one or the other. Do professors seek to add to his afflictions by preaching out of envy? Then, at least, he can rejoice that Christ is preached. Do adversaries seek his life? He is not terrified.

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The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Be of the Same Mind in the Lord

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The vainglorious man will ever be an envious man – jealous of every one that is more spiritual or more gifted than himself. And jealousy expresses itself in malice, and malice ends in strife (James 3:14-16).

How, then, can we "be of the same mind in the Lord"? The Apostle clearly shows that this can only be as we are marked by "lowliness of mind," and, to have the lowly mind, he says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." His was the lowly mind that led Him to make Himself of no reputation in order to serve others in love. Self likes to be served, and thinks it is exalted when being served by others; but love delights to serve.

If, then, we each forget self, refuse to seek a reputation for ourselves, and seek only to serve others in love, according to the lowly mind of Christ, we shall have the mind of the Lord, and "be of the same mind in the Lord."

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Rejoice in the Lord Alway

The Apostle has been telling us (1) that within the Christian circle there are some marked by envy, strife, and contention; (2) that all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's; (3) that many walk in such a way that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Alas! these things are still found among the people of God, and may well call forth sorrow and tears, even as they did with him.

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Moreover he not only looks up to Christ in the glory, but he looks for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to change our bodies of humiliation into bodies of glory. Looking around he may weep, but looking up, and looking on, he rejoices, and exhorts us to "Rejoice in the Lord alway."

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The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Let Your Gentleness Be Known of All Men

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May we then so speak and act while pursuing a separate path as the quiet in the land, that, if the world takes any account of us, it will only be to mark our "gentleness."

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Be Careful for Nothing

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We may have to face trials in our families, trials in our businesses, trials amongst the Lord's people; sorrows from sickness, sorrows from want, sorrows from the saints, that press upon us as a great burden and, as one has said, "How often a burden possesses a person's mind, and when he tries in vain to cast it off, it comes back and worries him."

How then can we find relief? How is it possible to "Be careful for nothing"? Very blessedly the Apostle unfolds the way to be free, not necessarily of the trial, but of the burden of the trial, so that it no longer weighs the spirit down with care and anxiety. He says, "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Thus only shall we find relief. "In every thing," whatever the trial may be, small or great, make it known to God in prayer; and tell God exactly what you wish, "let your requests be made known" to Him. The requests may not be for our good, they may not be according to the mind of God; they may even be foolish, but we are to make them known to God.

What will be the result? Will He answer the requests? Will He remove the trial? He may see that to answer the request, or remove the trial would not be for our good. So far as the immediate trial is concerned, He will act in perfect wisdom for our good, according to His perfect love. But this God will do; He will relieve our hearts from the burden of the trial. If we pour out our hearts before Him, He will pour in His peace into our hearts – that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

So Hannah found, in the days of old, when, in her sore trial she could say, "I ... have poured out my soul before the Lord." In result, we read, "Her countenance was no more sad." And yet, at the time, her circumstances were just the same. Afterward, indeed, the Lord changed her circumstances, but first He showed that He had the power to change Hannah. From grief of heart and bitterness of soul, she was brought into great peace – the peace of God which passeth all understanding – through making known her requests to God (1 Sam. 1:6-18).

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Think on These Things

Rejoicing in the Lord, and set free from care, we shall be able peacefully to delight our souls in the things that are pure and praiseworthy. In a world far from God we are continually faced with evil. It is in us and around us; it presses upon us from every side. At times we have to face it and deal with it in ourselves, or others; but, even so, to have to do with evil, in any form, is defiling and soiling to the mind. Alas! there is often with us a tendency to pry into evil, and to be over-busy in contending against it!

God would have us to find our delight in all that is true, and noble, and just and pure. The flesh in us is ever ready to listen to slander, and bad reports, and things that are vicious and blameworthy. But, says the Apostle, listen to the good report, and if there is anything virtuous and praiseworthy in your brother, "think on these things."

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Those Things, Which Ye Have Both Learned, and Received, and Heard, and Seen in Me, Do

The mind being set on things which are pure will prepare the way for a life that is according to God. Right "thinking" will lead to right "doing." Having said of the things that are pure, "think on these things" the Apostle now says, "Those things which ... ye have seen in me do."

It is not enough to have "learned" and "received" the truth, through the Apostle's writings, or to have "heard" it from his lips and "seen" it in his life. What we have learned, and received, and heard, and seen, is to be translated into our lives. We are, as another Apostle has said, to be "doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22).

Then, says the Apostle, if our minds are set on things that are pure, and our lives in accordance with the truth – if we "think" and "do" rightly – we shall find that not only the peace of God keeps our hearts, but that the God of peace will be with us.

In spite then of all the failure of the church and the trials by the way, how blessed the portion of those believers who

Stand fast in the Lord;

Have the same mind in the Lord;

Rejoice in the Lord;

Who are known of all men for their gentleness;

Who are careful for nothing;

Who have their minds set on things that are pure; and

Who, in practice, "do" the things they have learned and received.

Such will have their hearts governed by the peace of God, and will enjoy the support of the God of peace. In all these exhortations there is nothing that cannot be carried out by the simplest and youngest believer, in the power of the Holy Spirit. They demand no special gift; they require no great intellectual attainment. They form the very essence of practical Christian life, and are as applicable in these last difficult days as in the early days of freshness and power.

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The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Christ Our Pattern

In the second chapter of the Epistle, Christ is looked at, not as going up to glory, but, as coming down to the cross; and we see the lowly mind that marked Him in every step that led to the cross. Thus Christ, in all the lowly grace of His path from the glory to the cross, is presented as our perfect pattern to produce in us a life of lowly grace.

The flesh in us is vainglorious; and the effort to exalt self often leads to the belittling of others. This vanity ever leads to strife. So we read of the disciples, "there was also a strife among them," because they each wanted to be accounted the greatest (Luke 22:24). And how often, since that day, the root of strife amongst the people of God has been that someone wanted to be great. But, says the Apostle, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory: but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." We may think this difficult at times, for as one has said, "We may see great vanity or pride in another, and one may be going on really better than this or that person"; but if close to Christ, however comparatively well we may be walking, we shall feel in His presence our own nothingness, and see our brother in Christ, and all that is of Christ in him, rather than his faults. Then it will not be difficult for each to esteem other better than themselves.

The Apostle, then, would have us to be of one mind (vs. 2); the one mind that he desires us to have is the lowly mind (vs. 3); and the lowly mind has been perfectly set forth in Christ (vs. 5). The mind of Christ would deliver us from all the self-importance of the flesh, and lead each to esteem himself the least of all.

We need the mind of Christ if we are to exhibit the lowly grace of Christ. It is possible to affect a lowly manner, and use humble words before men; but, if the grace of Christ is to be seen in us we shall need the lowly mind that was in Christ. Thus the Apostle turns our eyes upon

Christ. Devoted saints may help us by their lives, their ministry, and their means, but only Christ can be the perfect pattern for the Christian's walk.

In all His perfect path He was the exact contrast to all that the flesh is. He made Himself of no reputation; the flesh in us would seek to make a reputation for itself, if not in the world, in the religious circle. He took upon Him the form of a servant; but the flesh in us likes to be served. He humbled Himself; the flesh in us likes to exalt itself. He was obedient to the will of another; we like to do our own wills.

In Christ we see the perfect love that made itself nothing in order to serve others. Love delights to serve; self likes to be served, and thinks itself exalted when others are waiting upon it. Walking in the spirit of Christ, vainglory would be gone, and the lowly grace of Christ would be expressed.

Win lowliness of heart, and having won beware;

And that thou grow not proud of lowliness have care.

The Lord Is My Shepherd and Other Papers, Christ Our Life

In all truth Paul could say, "For me to live is Christ." Christ was all in his life. If he lived, it was by Christ and for Christ. If death was his portion, he would die for Christ. Over such a Christian, adversaries had no power, Satan no point of attack, and death no terror. The malice of envious brethren could not move him, and the low walk of those who were minding earthly things only drew forth his tears. Self being gone as a motive, insults and desertions called forth no bitterness and rancor; circumstances, however trying, drew forth no complaint. His one object was not to defend or exalt himself, or to decry and belittle others, but, in all circumstances, whether in life or death, to magnify Christ.

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