Philippians - Commentaries by George Christopher Willis

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 38: A Help or a Hindrance?

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“Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, (my) dearly beloved.I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and (with) other my fellowlabourers, whose names (are) in the book of life.”

“So— then, my Brothers, beloved and passionately-longed-for, my joy and crown, thus stand-fast in (the) Lord, Beloved.Euodia I-urge, and Syntyche I-urge, to-mind the same-(thing) (or, to-be-of the same mind) in (the) Lord. Yes, I-entreat even thee, true yoke-fellow, take-hold-along-with them (these women), in-that-they struggled-along-with me in the gospel, with Clement also and my remaining fellow-laborers, whose names (are) in (the) book of-life.”

Philippians 4:1-3

The words “so then,” link this verse to the chapter we have just been considering. There we saw the fight fought, the victory won, and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, able to subdue all things: “So then— my brothers,” with such a hope, and such a Lord, “thus stand-fast in the Lord, beloved” (vs. 1). We are fighting under a Captain who is able to subdue every foe: a Captain who has never lost a battle, and never will: so then, we may well ‘stand-fast in the Lord’. It is the voice of the Captain cheering on His soldiers to stand fast against the shock of a charge by the enemy.

But before we speak of this, we must first bask for a while in the sunshine of the love that radiates from this verse: “My brothers, beloved and passionately longed for, my joy and crown.... beloved.” Our lovely Authorized Version has “dearly beloved,” in each case, instead of “beloved” alone: and I confess I like it better: and it may be right: only in the original it has but the one word, “beloved,” with no word qualifying it. But it is the stronger word, telling of the love of God: and I am not sure that our own English word, “beloved,” may not have lost some of the fervor that is contained in the Greek; and so “dearly beloved,” may give the Apostle’s meaning more truly.

As has been mentioned, this has been called “Paul’s love-letter”. Another has said— “This prolonged form of address has no parallel in St. Paul’s writings”1 But then, perhaps, the Philippian saints had “no parallel” in the affection the Apostle bore towards them. Notice that final “Beloved”, he seems to linger over this theme, as if unable to break away from it. It makes me think of the way “a certain Man” seemed to delight to repeat “greatly beloved” (Dan. 10:19) in Dan. 10:5, 11, 19 and then adds, “Be strong, yea, be strong” (Dan. 10:19). This love, known and treasured, whether with Daniel, whether with the Philippian saints, or whether with ourselves, makes strong: for “Love is strong as death” (Song of Sol. 8:6).

And then he calls them, “My joy and crown” (vs. 1). It is the ‘victor’s wreath’, of which he speaks here: the prize for winning in an athletic contest. It is the crown of ‘glory and honor’ our Savior won, (Heb. 2:9), by wearing the crown of thorns. We suggested that the prize mentioned in Philippians 3 was Christ Himself. But here it is the saints in Philippi who are his crown.

This may be another prize: for the Lord does not stint His gifts. It does not say if this is a present reward, or future. But in 1 Thess. 2:19 the Apostle writes: “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (1 Thess. 2:19). This would seem to indicate that it is a future reward: but I have not a doubt that both the Thessalonian saints and the Philippian saints were an unspeakable joy to the Apostle even now down here: so it is possible both present and future are included: at least in the joy. Those who have had the joy of winning souls to Christ will well understand his meaning. And after this, he still must repeat— “Beloved!”

Having lavished his love upon them, he now enjoins:

“Thus stand-fast in (the) Lord” (vs. 1).

Do you remember Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite? He is one of my special favorites. “The Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentils: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the Lord wrought a great victory” (2 Sam. 23:11-12). Shammah stood fast. It is a grand thing to stand, and better still to stand fast. Many a victory has been won by a single soldier of Christ, because he stood fast. In Gal. 2:11, we read of Paul winning just such a victory, single-handed, at Antioch. And, on the other hand, ‘many mighty men are lost, by daring not to stand’.

In Philippians 1:27 we have met this same word: only there it is “standing fast in one spirit, with one soul, together contending for the faith of the gospel, and not being scared in anything.” The Apostle would have his beloved Philippian brethren standing together as a regiment of soldiers, not one giving way.

In the following cases in the New Testament we are to stand fast:

You have, I am sure, noticed how often we get the word ‘stand’ in connection with ‘the whole armor of God’ in Eph. 6. In verse 11; twice in verse 13; and again in verse 14. The word is different, and perhaps not as emphatic as the one we have been considering: but it plainly shows how important it is to stand. A beloved brother once said to me, “All giving up is of the devil.” And I believe he was right. Let us never give up: for remember we are exhorted to ‘stand fast in the Lord’.

One of the special marks of the boards of the Tabernacle was that they were ‘standing up’. (Ex. 26:15; 36:20). How did they stand? Each board stood on two sockets of solid silver, (each weighing about 114 pounds) and Moses ‘fastened’ the sockets (Ex. 40:18): so how firm and solid they must have been. Each board had two ‘hands’ (Ex. 26:17: Margin) that took firm hold of the silver sockets. The sockets were made from the “redemption money,” (Num. 3:49) and told of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: so is absolutely secure. Each board tells of an individual believer. Each took fast hold of each socket with the “hands” of faith; and the top was held fast by cords (Ex. 35:18). We read of the cords of a man, with bands of love (Hos. 11:4), so I think the cords tell of love: and once again we find that love makes all strong and firm. So in this beautiful picture we see each believer is to “stand fast in the Lord” (vs. 1).

We have already noticed that in these few verses in Philippians we have seen the saint run: which tells of pressing toward the mark, at the end of the race. We have seen him walk, which tells of his behavior, his “walk” through this world, before those about him. Now we are called on to see him stand. Perhaps this is hardest of all, and if we try in our own strength, we will surely fall; but we are specially told it is “in the Lord,” we are to stand: and in our last verse of Philippians 3, we read:

“HE IS ABLE”

In Psa. 1:1, we read “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” So we see we may “walk” and “stand” and “sit,” in the wrong way, as well as “run” and “walk” and “stand” in the right way. May the Lord help us to choose the right!

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We come now to the sad sight of a hindrance to the Apostle’s exhortation to “stand fast.” A regiment of soldiers cannot possibly stand fast if they are not of one mind, but are engaged in opposing each other instead of the enemy: and that is just what was happening in Philippi.

“Euodia I urge, and Syntyche I urge, to mind the same thing (or, to be of the same mind) in (the) Lord” (Phil. 4:2)

Euodia2 and Syntyche were two sisters in Philippi between whom a misunderstanding, or quarrel, had arisen. Paul knew these two sisters well for they had shared his contest in the gospel in the early days, when first he preached there. We do not know what was the cause of the quarrel, but we do know that “only by pride cometh contention” (Prov. 13:10). It is probable that Epaphroditus had brought word to Paul of this sad trouble in the assembly at Philippi: and I think it had weighed heavily on the Apostle’s mind as he has been writing. In the second verse of the second chapter, he had written: “Fulfill my joy when ye mind the same thing.” Now he uses exactly the same words, but this time addressed directly to the ones quarreling. It would seem that he had them in mind when he wrote these words the first time.

Notice how wisely he speaks to these sisters: “Euodia I urge, Syntyche I urge, to mind the same thing in the Lord.” He does not say, “I urge Euodia and Syntyche.” But he speaks to each one separately: not suggesting one is more to blame than another. Indeed he makes no suggestion of any blame. You remember our Lord said: “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt. 5:23-24). That is what these sisters should have done. The Greek word for “be reconciled” is di-allasso. This word is never used for man to be reconciled to God. Then it is a different word, kat-allasso. Di-allasso denotes mutual concession after mutual hostility, an idea absent in kat-allasso. (Abbott-Smith, quoting Lightfoot). It would seem that when saints have a quarrel or misunderstanding, the Lord sees that generally, if not always, there is fault on both sides; and both need to make concessions. Euodia would have to make concessions to Syntyche, and Syntyche would need to make concessions to Euodia. There is a possible exception to this in the case of a wife who had left her husband and wished to be reconciled to him again: 1 Cor. 7:11: here kat-allasso is used. But this, perhaps, we can understand, as she (a Christian woman) had been told not to depart from her husband. I think every other case where this word is used, is speaking of man being reconciled to God: where, of course, man only is wrong, and makes concessions.

Paul knew the Scripture, “The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention before it be meddled with” (Prov. 17:14). This would make him the more urgent to see this strife settled. Mr. Lavington writes: “From a small beginning, if it is not judged, evil will spread. How many a time from a very small root there has arisen that which has taken floods of tears to settle. Let us be watchful. Beloved, if you have anything against one another, judge it before the Lord. You cannot be happy with the Lord, while you are not of one mind with your brethren.”

On the other hand, there are times when the truth and glory of God are concerned, and we dare not give in on such questions. Some years ago there was a very popular writer who remarked: “Let the truth of God suffer, but let not love suffer.” This we cannot do. Let God be true, but every man a liar. But we need to be exceedingly careful that it is not our own opinion and our own will that we are pressing. Cromwell wrote to his fellow-Christians in Scotland: “I beseech thee by the mercies of the Beloved to try to conceive of the possibility of being wrong.” I recall my mother once saying: “In a quarrel, give way whenever you possibly can, and then it will be known, if you do not, that it is because you cannot do so with a good conscience.” I think that is sound advice.

“Yes, I entreat even thee, true yoke-fellow, take-hold-along-with them, (these women), in that they struggled along with me in the gospel” (Phil. 4:3).

There is a very beautiful change from the word Paul used to address Euodia and Syntyche, to the word he uses to his “true yoke-fellow” (vs. 3). He gives what is almost a command to Euodia and Syntyche: but of his colleague he asks a favor. Only in his letters to his beloved Macedonian Christians (in Philippi and Thessalonica) does Paul use the more gracious word. (1 Thess. 4:1, where both words are linked together; 1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Thess. 2:1).

Another Scripture that may have come to Paul at this time is Prov. 18:19. “A brother offended is harder to be won than a fenced city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle”; cold, straight, unbending; bedded in cold, hard stone; and they cannot come together. But, bring heat enough and soon they can be close to each other. That, I think, is partly why there was such burning love in verse 1. Paul well knew the danger and the difficulty: and so he turns to his “true yoke-fellow,” (vs. 3) and entreats his help in this most difficult and delicate matter. For sisters are as hard to win as brothers. I have little doubt that the “true yoke-fellow” (vs. 3) was Epaphroditus. Very likely he was writing the letter at Paul’s dictation, just as Tertius wrote the letter to the Romans from Paul’s dictation (Rom. 16:22). You remember how in that letter Tertius interrupted the dictation to send a little message of his own. My own thought is that similarly Paul broke off his dictation to say to

Epaphroditus, “Yes, I entreat even thee, true yoke-fellow, help them, (these women) who struggled along with me in the gospel.” Undoubtedly Paul and Epaphroditus had talked this whole matter over, and Paul may already have suggested to Epaphroditus that he help them in their difficulties. Quite likely, Epaphroditus was alarmed at such a prospect, and this would give us to understand the Apostle’s word, “Yes!”— “Yes! Epaphroditus, you help them!” “Oh, not I!” perhaps he replied: “Yes! I entreat even thee, true yoke-fellow! Take hold along with them; for they struggled along with me in the gospel.” And Epaphroditus wrote it down, even though perhaps he was not meant to, and how glad we are he did! The word translated help is the same word used when Simon Peter got that wonderful catch of fish in Luke 5: they beckoned to their partners to take hold along with them to bring in the fish. Here in Philippians 4:3 it is in the “middle voice,” which intimates doing something for oneself: so may suggest that Euodia and Syntyche were, at least, wanting to get the old strife settled.

And remember Paul told them to “mind the same thing in the Lord.” How sad and disgraceful when those “in the Lord” quarrel. Both in Him; and yet quarreling! In verse 1 of this chapter the Apostle wrote: “Stand fast in the Lord” (vs. 1).

Now it is, “Mind the same thing in the Lord,” and in verse 4 we read: “Rejoice in the Lord” (ch. 3:1). Does this not tell us that whatever we do, we are to do it `in the Lord’. And if we did but bear this in mind— have it in our hearts: how careful it would make us in all our actions!

The apostle urges help for these sisters, for he recalls in the days gone by how they “struggled along with me in the gospel.” There is no suggestion that they preached: there is no reference to public service here. There is a great difference between preaching the gospel, and sharing the contentions of the gospel. Many a man has labored diligently in the gospel, but never preached in his life; and there might be men and women who were striving every day in the gospel as diligently, or more so, even, than those who preached it every day.

There is beautiful choice in the language of the Holy Spirit: and we do well to give careful heed to it. We all ought to know that the New Testament puts the Christian woman in the place of exceeding blessedness, removing every thought that would give her an inferior place in Christ, but it puts her also at the same time in the background, wherever it is a case of public action. Here officially, so to speak, the man is called to be uncovered, the woman to be veiled. She is thus as it were put behind the man, whereas, when you speak of our privileges in Christ, there is neither male nor female. It is important to see where there is no difference and where there is. The first epistle to Corinthians is most plain that the head of the woman is the man, so the man is the glory of the woman. We find there the administrative difference between the man and the woman. When you come to the heavenly privileges we have in Christ, all these distinctions disappear. There is no public action that I know in the world or in the Church allotted to the Christian woman. As to private dealing with souls, the case is different. In their father’s house, the four daughters of Philip may have prophesied. They were evidently highly gifted women; for it is not said of them that they labored in the gospel, but that they prophesied— one of the highest forms of gift from Christ. At the same time the Holy Spirit, who tells us that a woman might and did prophesy as a fact, instructs us that it is forbidden for a woman to speak in the Church where prophesying properly had its course. But there a woman was forbidden to speak, not even allowed to ask a question, much less to give an answer. Yet as to the private scene, at home, even with an Apollos, a woman might fitly act: that is, if she acted with and under her husband. Priscilla might be of more spiritual weight than Aquila; but this very thing would lead her to be most careful to take an unobtrusive lowly place. (Acts 18:24-26).

There is no suggestion that Euodia and Syntyche had ever put themselves forward in an unseemly public sort; but they had shared the early trials of the gospel with Paul. At Corinth, on the contrary, the women seem to have assumed much, and the apostle manifests his sense of it by the reproachful demand, if the Word of God came out from them, or if it came to them only. (1 Cor. 14:36). No doubt they reasoned that, if women have gifts, why should they not exercise them and exercise them in all places? But He who gives gifts is alone entitled to say when, how, and by whom they are to be exercised. At Philippi where there was an obedient spirit, there might have been too much reluctance to meddle with these otherwise estimable women, who were estranged from each other. So the Apostle asks Epaphroditus to help them: “Help them who are such as contended with me in the gospel.” He gives them special praise. They strove with him in the work. He joins himself with these good women whom Epaphroditus seems to have been afraid to try and help. He joins them also with Clement and other fellow-laborers: not named: but whose names are recorded above in the Book of Life. And so he praises and encourages the fellowship in the service of the gospel not only with faithful men, but with women whose faithfulness was not forgotten because there were painful hindrances just now.3

Perhaps we should not leave this verse without a few words about ‘the Book of Life’. You recall Moses asked the Lord to blot him out of His book, if only the Lord would spare Israel: but the Lord would not blot Moses out of His book, instead He found a way to spare His people. (Ex. 32:32).

In Luke 10 the Seventy returned to our Lord with joy, saying, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name” (Luke 10:17). But the Lord told them not to rejoice in this; “but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). In Heb. 12:23 we read of the “church of the Firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Heb. 12:23) In Rev. 3:5 the Lord promises the overcomer in the church in Sardis— the church that had a name to live but was dead— He promises the overcomer, “I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life” (Rev. 3:5). Some have had difficulty over this verse, thinking that it tells us that we can be saved, and afterward lost: that our names can be written in the Book of Life, and then blotted out. I think if we remember that this church had a name to live, but were dead, that all is plain. They claimed they had eternal life, but they had not: they claimed their names were in the Book of Life; but they were not there rightfully. It has been compared to a voting register. A list of the names of all those who claim to have a right to vote is published: but when these claims are examined, it is proved that some had no such right, and their names are crossed out. There is not a suggestion that one who truly has eternal life, will ever have his name crossed out of the Book of Life.

In Rev. 13:8 we read that “all that dwell on the earth” (what a contrast to those whose citizenship is in heaven) “shall do homage to the beast, (every one) whose name had not been written from the founding of the world in the Book of Life of the slain Lamb.” These dear saints in Philippi were ones whose names were in the Book of Life. We get a very similar statement in Rev. 17:8.

In Rev. 20:11 we see the Great White Throne, and Him that sat on it and the dead small and great must come and be judged by Him. Books were opened; and another book was opened which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works. And if any one was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the lake of fire. Reader, is your name in the Book of Life?

In Rev. 21 we read of the holy city, new Jerusalem; and there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Well may we rejoice, as the Lord told the Seventy, if our

names are written in heaven: written I doubt not, in the Lamb's Book of Life! (Luke 10:20).

Now the God of endurance and

of encouragement

give to you to be

like-minded one toward another,

according to Christ Jesus;

that ye may

with one accord, with one mouth,

glorify the God and Father

of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Wherefore

receive ye one another,

according as

the Christ also has received you

to the glory of God.

Rom. 15:5-7 (J.N.D.)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 39: Rejoice!

"Rejoice in the Lord always (and) again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord (is) at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

"Rejoice in (the) Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice! Let your yieldingness (or, gentleness) be-known unto-all men. The Lord (is) near. Beanxious-about nothing; but in everything, by-your prayer and by-your supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be-made-known unto God, then the peace of-God, the (peace) surpassing every mind (of man), shall-keep-guard-over your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:4-7

Our last meditation ended with thoughts of the Book of Life, and we noticed that our Lord told His disciples to rejoice (not that the devils were subject to them, but) that their names were written in heaven. This seems to link our last meditation with the Scripture before us now. Luke, who was so much with Paul, tells us this saying of our Lord, and it is very probable that he told it also to Paul: "Rejoice.... your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Paul responds: your "names are in the Book of Life, rejoice!" What an excellent reason, and what a sure ground, for joy! How many would give all they possess to know for certain that their names are in the Book of Life. And we may know this for certain: each one of us may know this: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). Well may we rejoice in the Lord alway!

Is it a new truth that the Apostle Paul teaches us, when he tells us to rejoice in the Lord? No, again and again do we hear these words in the Old Testament. Hannah could sing: "My heart rejoiceth in the Lord" (1 Sam. 2:1). And on through the Psalms and the Prophets we hear this same refrain, over and over again.1

It is in the Old Testament we read: "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). And have we less reason to 'rejoice in the Lord' than the saints in Old Testament days? We who have seen the very image of the good things, and not the 'shadows' only? Some of you will have read an old book that begins by telling us of those who say: "You Christians seem to have a religion that makes you miserable. You are like a man with a headache. He does not want to get rid of his head, but it hurts him to keep it. You cannot expect outsiders to seek very earnestly for anything so uncomfortable." Shame on us! Shame, that such a thing can be said: and, I grieve to say, said with some truth of those who should rejoice in the Lord alway: those who should be the happiest people in the world. But, perhaps, you say: "You do not know all the trouble and sorrow I have, or you would not expect me to rejoice." They tell us that a better translation of our verse reads this way: "Rejoice in the Lord on all occasions." And I suppose this takes in all our troubles and sorrows. Our beloved Lord was 'The Man of Sorrows', and yet He tells us of 'My joy'. And His servant could write: "As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10). The Scriptures are clear that our joy is one that is not affected by adversity: we rejoice always, on all occasions, in dark days, as well as bright:

"Although the fig tree shall not blossom,

Neither shall fruit be in the vines;

The labor of the olive shall fail,

And the fields shall yield no meat;

The flock shall be cut off from the fold,

And there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,

And He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,

And He will make me to walk upon mine high places.

To the Chief Singer on my stringed instruments."

(Hab. 3:17-19; See New Translation)

When first we were married, life was full of joy: `as well expect the soaring lark to keep silent, as expect the joyous saint not to sing God's praise', so there was not a day passed that we did not have singing in our little home: but the time came when the cares of this world crowded out the songs of Heaven, yet, I grieve to say, we hardly noticed it. For a wedding present a beloved friend had given us a beautiful canary in a brass cage, and its songs were a constant delight: but one day they stopped, and how we missed them: then our eyes were opened to the fact that our own songs had stopped also: and what was our shame, when our neighbors opposite remarked how they missed the singing they had grown to love.

It is told of Mr. Hyde of India that one day he was traveling to a distant village with a beloved Punjabi evangelist and his two little children. The men were speaking sadly about the village— how long the gospel had been preached there, and how little interest the people showed. The children had no such sad thoughts: they were so happy that they sang, and went on singing psalms and hymns one after another, till the two men were constrained to join in, and they were so carried away with the spirit of praise that they continued singing till they reached the village. Imagine their amazement when they found the people full of interest, and eager to confess Christ and follow Him, and over a dozen showed such a living faith, that they were baptized before they left. This was the first gospel triumph in that village, heralded and brought about by the spirit of praise from the children.

In another village they were so discouraged, they decided to leave early next morning, but that night someone suggested they should all go to the village and sing the gospel in it. This they did, and sang on and on, till after midnight. Next morning they were preparing to leave, when a young man came running from the village, to beg them not to go, for not one, he told them, had gone to work that morning, but were even then considering if they should not at once decide for Christ. They waited, and found some fifteen men, mostly heads of families, quite ready to be baptized. The young man who had brought the message said to Mr. Hyde, "This is the result of your singing last night. You sang—

'Lift up your heads, O ye gates,

And let the King of Glory enter in!'

Has He not entered in this morning?"

Mr. Hyde used to say that when he noticed few souls being led to Christ he always found it was due to his lack of a spirit of praise. He would then confess his sin, ask pardon, and take the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. His experience then invariably was that Christ would again draw souls to Himself through him. No fisher can possibly throw his line lightly when he is dull and sad. It is the joyous one who generally wins souls to Christ.2

We must remember that joy is the second of the fruit of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace." Also, joy is a legacy, like peace, that our Savior left us before He returned to Glory: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). He was leaving them: but His joy would remain in them. And again, ponder our Lord's most wondrous prayer: "And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13).

Let us not forget that it is "in the Lord" we are to rejoice. Some rejoice in their homes, in their families, in their wealth, in their learning: but such joys all fade: but when we rejoice in the Lord we have a joy that no man taketh from us. True, sin may rob us of it: and we may have to pray "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (Psa. 51:12). (Not, you will note, "Restore unto me Thy salvation"!). But our Epistle does not touch on this subject: and neither shall we. It may be found in the first epistle of John. Our Epistle is too full of its theme of joy. Eleven times, I have counted "rejoice," and five times "joy," in this little Epistle, Here is the key-note of the normal Christian life.

But though Philippians does not suggest the loss of this priceless gift of joy: it does speak of those things that would rob us of it. The sad quarrel between Euodia and Syntyche had surely taken away their joy. Why could they not give in to each other? Now the Apostle writes:

"Let your yieldingness (or, gentleness) be known unto all men. The Lord (is) near" (Phil. 4:5).

The word translated "yieldingness" or "gentleness" is epieikeiaz, and is another of those Greek words almost impossible to translate. Recently there has been a very useful little book published, intended for missionaries: but good for us all: it is called, "Have We No Rights?" I fancy that the fair authoress of this little book had been having special lessons from the Lord Himself in epieikeia. One who has epieikeia will not insist on his rights, even though they truly are his rights: but he will yield. It has been translated "sweet-reasonableness." But that only tells part.

It is one of the special characteristics of our beloved Lord Himself, combined with meekness. (2 Cor. 10:1). It is one of the characteristics of the wisdom that is from above (James 3:17). An "overseer" should have epieikeia (1 Tim. 3:3). And I gather from Titus 3:2, we all need it.

Epieikeia would do away with that hardness that we are apt to call faithfulness, for we can be faithful, without being hard. I think it was epieikeia made Boaz welcome Ruth: and what a reward he had. I think it was epieikeia let David eat the shewbread; and let our Lord heal on the Sabbath day. Peter needed a great deal of epieikeia to forgive his brother, not seven times, but seventy-times-seven. I suppose that

epieikeia was exactly what Euodia and Syntyche needed: and I am inclined to think it is what most of us need very badly indeed. Another has said: “Justice is human, but epieikeia is divine” (W. Barclay). And we are to let our epieikeia— our yieldingness— our willingness-to-give-way, be known unto all men.

In the next verse we are told to let our requests be made known unto God. Here is one of those instances of the exquisite beauty of the Word of God. The Greek words for known, in these two verses (5 & 6) are different. In verse 5, “be known” tells of knowledge “by observation and experience.” My epieikeia is to be known to all men— not by going round and telling them about it, but because they observe how I act towards others; and they experience how I act towards themselves, and in this way we let our epieikeia be known. But our requests are made known unto God by telling Him our needs in prayer and supplication.

Then follows the statement that will give such a powerful motive to act on this exhortation: “The Lord (is) near.” This may mean (as far as the grammar goes) that the Lord is near to us: as He promised in Matt. 28 “Lo, I am with you alway,” and in Psa. 34:18: “The Lord is nigh unto them that are broken of heart.” Or it may mean that the coming of the Lord is near, when we shall be forever with the Lord.

You recall the Apostle had just written, “Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we eagerly await the Savior.” There is a child near here whose mother is in hospital: as she waked this morning, she murmured: “I dreamed Mummie came home today!” That was Paul’s attitude: by day and by night, he was “eagerly awaiting” the Savior, the One he loved so dearly. “Maranatha,” “The Lord cometh,” (1 Thess. 5:2) seems to have been a sort of watchword with the disciples of old. In James 5:7 we read: “Be ye also patient.... for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:8). These are almost the same words as in our verse in Philippians, and here there is no question. So, personally, I have not a doubt that the Lord’s coming is the Apostle’s thought: but the Greek words may mean either, and both are true, so may we not appropriate both for ourselves? He is near us: and just how near that “shout” may be, who may say? “PERHAPS TODAY” is a motto we all might have on our walls. If we are momentarily expecting that call to meet our Lord in the air, we will not be troubling very much about our “rights” down here. How many quarrels would that end!

“The Lord is near. Be anxious about nothing; but in everything, by-your-prayer and by-your-supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known before God, then the peace of God, the (peace) surpassing every mind (of man), shall-keep-guard-over your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).

We must repeat the words ‘the Lord is near’, for they are needed as a motive not to be anxious, just as much as they are needed for a motive not to stand up for our rights, but let our yieldingness be made known to all men. The word translated ‘be anxious’, just above, is translated ‘be careful’ in our beloved Authorized Version: and that would be a better translation, were it not that ‘be careful’ has come to have a different meaning. My wife used to worry a great deal about the meals, so I made her the text: “I would have you without carefulness”; and it always hung over our kitchen door. There was a Christian corporal who often visited us in Shanghai, and his place at table was just opposite the kitchen door. We used to see him gazing at this text, but thought nothing of it. One evening, with a voice of triumph, he remarked: “I understand it at last! I could not imagine why you had that text over the kitchen door, but now I know. You did not want the Amah (the Chinese woman who helped in the house) to be worried when she broke the dishes, so you told her she need not be careful.” I need hardly say, that was not the meaning.

If we could translate this verse: “Do not let your hearts be filled with care,” I think it would give the meaning better. The word translated ‘Be careful’ comes from the word for care as we see it in 1 Peter 5:7: “Casting all your care upon Him,” or, “The care of this world” in Matt. 13:22, that chokes the Word. God’s way to get rid of this care that so often saps our very life, is to cast it all on Him. In Heb. 10:35 we are told: “Cast not away therefore your confidence” (Heb. 10:35). But, as another has put it, too often we ‘Cast away our confidence; But carry all our care.’

And the way to cast all our care upon Him, so that we are anxious for nothing, is told us in this lovely verse in Philippians: “In everything, by your prayer and by your supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” Sometimes the load of care seems too heavy to cast it anywhere. Then the Lord invites us to “roll thy way upon the Lord” (Psa. 37:5: Margin). When we were children in Canada, in the winter, we would make great snowballs; and when they got too heavy to lift, we still could roll them. So roll that great load of care on Him, “because it is a matter of care to Him, concerning you,” as the Greek so sweetly puts it. And in the Greek Testament two different words are used here for care. The one is “anxious, harassing care”: the other is God’s loving “providential care” over us.3

We are not to be anxious about “one thing,” as it is literally, but in “everything” we are to let our requests be made known unto God: and you do this “by your prayer and by your supplication with thanksgiving.” True, God knows all before we make them known: but He loves to have us come and tell Him. Actually it does not say “your prayer and your supplication,” but “the prayer and the supplication”. You may remember we have suggested that the Greek word “the” is like a finger pointing: and here we have two fingers, pointing to two different words. It is as though the Apostle was thinking: “by the prayer and by the supplication, which of course you will make.” You recall how sometimes only one article (the) is used with two words, to link them closely together. Here we see just the opposite, twice the article is used, where we cannot use it at all, to point out the two separate acts when we come to God with our anxious, harassing cares. So we have substituted your for the “the” that we cannot use. And let us remember “everything” means just what the word says: every single thing: the little things, as well as the big things: the things we are ashamed to bring to our Lord: in not one of these we are to be anxious: for every one is to be spread out before Him.

There are, I think, in the Greek New Testament (if we count “thanksgiving”) seven different words for prayer: and we have four of them in our present verse. The first, translated “prayer,” tells us of prayer in general— of any address to God. The second, “supplication” tells of prayer for particular needs or benefits. The first is only used of prayer to God: the second may also be used towards our fellowmen. These two words are found together again in Eph. 6:18 and 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5. The first may include worship, as we come to God in prayer; whereas the second is definitely what we want from God. And, let us not forget, for Paul never forgot, that all is to be with “thanksgiving.” “Regarded as one manner of prayer, it (thanksgiving) expresses what ought never to be absent from any of our devotions (Phil. 4:6; Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:18; 1 Tim. 2:1); namely, the grateful acknowledgment of past mercies, as distinguished from the earnest seeking of future. As such it may, and will, subsist in heaven (Rev. 4:9; 7:12); will indeed be larger, deeper, fuller there than here: for only there will the redeemed know how much they owe to their Lord; and this it will do, while all other forms of prayer, in the very nature of things, will have ceased in the entire possession and present fruition of the things prayed for” (Trench: Synonyms, No. 51). And let us not forget, the Word commands: “In everything give thanks” (1 Thess. 5:18).

A bright example of obedience to this command happened years ago in Shanghai. A Christian sailor retired from the British navy, and settled in that city with his wife and little boy. He got a job with the Shanghai Municipal Council, but soon developed an incurable disease, which he knew must before long end his ability to provide for his little family. One month-end he brought home his pay, and turned it all over to his wife. That afternoon a kind friend sent over her carriage to bring the wife and child to have tea with her. On her return, the poor wife discovered that her purse, with the whole month's wages was missing. She quickly walked back to her friend's house, looking everywhere: but no trace could be found of the lost purse.

As her husband came in at the door that evening, she rushed to him, and sobbed out, "I've lost my purse, with all your month's pay! Whatever shall we do?" The husband quietly replied, "The Scripture says in everything give thanks, so we'll go into the sitting room and kneel down and thank the Lord." "You may," she replied, "but I can't." So the husband went in alone, and knelt and gave thanks. A few days later, the dear wife had learned this hard lesson, and came to her husband saying, "My dear, if you'll come into the sitting room again, I'll kneel with you and give thanks also." And they did.

Need I add, the Lord did not forsake them, either then, or a little later when he was compelled to give up his work? And the peace of God kept guard over their hearts, even through that dark, sad time.

The fourth word is translated requests. It is also found in 1 John 5:15: "Whatsoever we request, we know that we have the requests which we have requested of Him." In any prayer there may be a number of requests: for example, in what we call "The Lord's Prayer," (Dan. 9:3) there are generally reckoned seven requests. And so we spread all our cares and needs, and mercies already granted, every one, out before the Lord, in all simplicity, as a tiny child to its Father.

And the result?

"Then the peace of God, the (peace) surpassing every mind4 (of man), shall-keep-guard-over your hearts (and your thoughts) in Christ Jesus."

We must remember that there is a vast difference between the "peace of God," and "peace with God." Rom. 5:1 tells us: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." We were lost sinners, and enemies in our mind by wicked works: how could peace with God be made? If I believe on Christ and what He has done, then I can boldly say that for Christ's sake, even my sins are forgiven: therefore I can add: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). The value is not in the faith, but in our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot get the blessing without believing, but it is an answer to the worth of Christ in God's sight.

But beside this settled peace which we have through the work of Christ, there is "the peace of God, which has nothing to do with the forgiveness of our sins": though that is in one sense the foundation of all our blessing: but this, "the peace of God," (vs. 7) is peace amidst the circumstances through which we pass day by day: and it is a peace "surpassing every mind of man." The Apostle was in prison, bound with a chain to a Roman soldier: yet he was filled with both joy and peace. And, as joy is the second, peace is the third fruit of the Spirit: and like joy it is a legacy left by our beloved Lord, before He returned to His Home in Glory: "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you" (John 14:27).

It is, in very truth, a peace that surpasses every mind of man: mind, notice, not knowledge: for "the peace of God" (vs. 7) lies in a higher sphere than intellect: a truth we do well to remember today.

This "peace of God" stands as a sacred sentinel to keep guard over our hearts and our thoughts. We may see the meaning of the word translated "keep guard" from 2 Cor. 11:32: "In Damascus the governor.... was guarding the city.... to take me." This "sentinel" will guard from foes within and without. It will guard from those evil thoughts that so readily arise within, hated and unbidden: thoughts which, thank God, we are able with His help to bring into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5). This peace guards also from all the filth of this age, that attacks both "eye-gate" and "ear-gate," and can give us to pass through all undefiled. But let me not suppose that if I willingly open these gates to the enemy: willingly turn from my Bible to television, or the like, that I can expect my heavenly guard to fight for me then. But He is ever there ready to defend our hearts and thoughts: not only from the filth, but also from the cares of which we have just spoken. In Col. 3:15 (New Translation) we read: "Let the peace of Christ preside (literally, 'act as umpire'), or, direct, rule, control, in your hearts." So we have the peace of God to guard, and the peace of Christ to rule, in our hearts. How safe we are, and what peace we have, if we will but let these heavenly guests have control!

And let us not forget that all is "in Christ Jesus" (vs. 7) (ch. 1:1). Christ Jesus is my rock and my fortress (Psa. 31:2-3) within which the peace of God keeps guard over hearts and thoughts. So the picture is complete: we have the fortress and we have the garrison that guards it. Both are divine. What perfect safety, and what perfect peace, is there for every believer! In 1 Peter 1:5 we "are kept guarded by the power of God, through faith for salvation" (J.N.D.) "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee" (Isa. 26:3). Therefore, my Beloved, "Trust ye in the Lord forever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is the rock of ages" (Isa. 26:3-4; margin).

And before we leave this lovely passage of Scripture, let us notice how in verse 1, we have LOVE; in verse 4 we have JOY; and now in verse 7 we have PEACE— LOVE, JOY, PEACE: the first three of the nine fruit of the Spirit. May we know more and more of the infinite fullness of each one of these!

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee.

Isa. 26:3

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 40: Think!....Do!

"Finally, brethren,

whatsoever things are true,

whatsoever things (are) honest,

(or, venerable: margin)

whatsoever things (are) just,

whatsoever things (are) pure,

whatsoever things (are) lovely,

whatsoever things (are) of good report;

if (there be) any virtue,

and if (there be) any praise,

think on these things.

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."

"(As for) that-which-remains (to be said), Brothers,

Whatsoever-(thing) are true,

Whatsoever noble,

Whatsoever just,

Whatsoever pure,

Whatsoever loveable,

Whatsoever sweet-to-speak-of;

If (there be) any virtue,

And if any praise,

On these-(things) meditate.

What-(things) ye both learned,

And received,

And heard,

And saw in me,

These-(things) practice;

And the God of-Peace shall-be with you."

Philippians 4:8-9

This verse begins in exactly the same way as the first verse of the third chapter: "(As for) that which remains (to be said)," or "for the rest." It may indicate that the letter is drawing to a close: and indeed this is so: for the portion we hope to ponder in this chapter is all that remains to be said before the Apostle turns to the final object of writing: to acknowledge the gift sent by the saints in Philippi.

In our last chapter we thought of "the peace of God," (vs. 7) as the divine sentinel to keep guard over our "hearts and thoughts" (Rom. 2:15); to repel foes from within and without. When we were children we used to play a sort of game to see if we could stop thinking, and just leave our mind a blank: but we never succeeded. The Spirit of God knows well how these minds of ours are always active: always thinking: our divine sentinel is there to keep away those hateful, evil thoughts: but we need something more than that: we need the positive side as well as the negative. If our mind is always busy with thoughts, and evil thoughts are excluded, what then?

That is what we have before us now in verse 8. That is what "remains to be said" with regard to our hearts and our thoughts. Now the Spirit of God, by the Apostle, presents to us those things which should occupy us instead of the old bad thoughts. We will see that the God of peace Himself promises to be with us if we give heed to verses 8 and 9; and here we see the furnishings for the home He is to occupy.

Before we meditate on the eight new and wondrous subjects that are now to fill our hearts and thoughts, I think we must look for a moment at the word near the end of our verse, translated “think on these things” (vs. 8). It is not the ordinary word for “think” and has nothing to do with the word translated “thoughts” in verse 7. It primarily means to calculate or reckon. It is a very favorite word of Paul’s, especially in Romans. Perhaps the best example of its use as “think”, is in 1 Cor. 13:5: “Love thinketh no evil.” Literally that is, “Love does not reckon up the evil.” Someone we love does us a wrong; but we do not brood over it, or reckon up the details of it. Love does not “think” of the evil, but rather seeks to make excuses for it. That is a negative example, but I do not recall a positive. We had it once before in this Epistle: “I count not myself to have attained” (Phil. 3:13). It does also have the meaning of consider, or meditate, especially from the view of “calculating.”

Now let us seek with the Lord’s help to meditate, consider, calculate, these wondrous eight subjects that are to fill our hearts and thoughts. The more deeply we ponder them, I believe, the more we will realize how far short we come in our likeness to them. And that may— I hope, will— turn our eyes to the only One who does fully measure up to these qualities. And if, as we look at them, “we see Jesus,” our meditation will not be wasted.

The first is: “Whatsoever-(things are) true” (vs. 8). Does not this turn our eyes at once to the only One of Whom it can be truly said: “He that is true” (John 21:24) (Rev. 3:7). He is absolutely true: in Him is no variableness or shadow of turning. We can depend on Him to the uttermost and He will never fail us, will never let us down. What comfort, what rest, does such a Savior, such a Friend, mean to us! He Himself says: “I am the.... truth.” If you will take a good concordance and look up the words “true,” “truth,” etc., you may be surprised to find that the Apostle John is the writer who loves these words best. We are apt to think of John as the Apostle of love: and how he delights to use this word also: but you will find he speaks of things that are true, not far short of a hundred times. He would not have love at the expense of truth. Listen, for example, to these little bits from his letters: “I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth” (2 John 4); again, “I have no greater joy than these things that I hear of my children walking in the truth” (3 John 4) (2 John 4; 3 John 4 N.T.). And so we may see that whatsoever things are true, may have a very wide application; not only to speak truth: or even act in a true and upright manner, that will deceive no one: but it carries us on to the wondrous truth of God that He reveals to us in His word. And, “Thy Word is truth” (John 17:17). The Word says of us: “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). If a man constantly thinks of something, the time will come when he cannot stop thinking of it: and woe be it to him, if these thoughts are evil and impure and false.

Our thoughts form us; and it is out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. And let us not forget that our thoughts are formed by what we read, and look at, and hear. How much about us is superficial, or false. Our newspapers, the radio, the magazines about the house: do these help us to meditate on whatsoever things are true? Do we realize what a terrific influence these things have on our children, as well as on ourselves? And how much of all this is not true, but utterly false, as we very well know. Little wonder the Spirit of God exhorts us to think on, to meditate on, to calculate, whatsoever things are true.

The Word here tells us to calculate. Let us calculate the awful loss to one who does not heed this admonition. It may mean the loss of a soul: if not your own soul, it may be the soul of one you love even better than yourself. It has been well said:

Notice well, “Whatsoever things are true,” (vs. 8) comes first in our list of those things on which we are to meditate. It also has the first place in the armor of God: “Having your loins gird about with truth” (Eph. 6:14). May God help us, like Moses of old, to learn to refuse, and to choose! To refuse the false, and to choose the true!

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Then comes “semnos.” It is another of those Greek words almost impossible to translate. Of it, and the corresponding noun, Dr. Barclay writes: “There are no more majestic words in the whole Greek language.” It carries with it the meaning of grave, stately, dignified; yet it is not sad, for you will recall how only a few lines before the Apostle tells us to rejoice. It tells of kingliness and royalty; it is a word with the majesty of Deity about it. One translates it: “The dignity of holiness.” Archbishop Trench writes: “The semnos has a grace and dignity not lent him from earth; but which he owes to that higher citizenship which is also his.” It tells of those things that have to do with the heavenly world. I suppose Moses was a semnos man, especially when he came down from the mount, and his face shone. I think Enoch, Elijah and Elisha were semnos men.

Beloved, does not this word challenge your heart? Do you know today a single truly semnos man, except the Man Christ Jesus? And yet, the deacons and their wives, and also the aged men were all to be semnos.

(1 Tim. 3:8, 11; Titus 2:2). And we are to pray for kings, so that we all may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all piety and semoteti (1 Tim. 2:2). The overseers especially are to have this quality; and Titus was to show the young men an example of it, in his own life (1 Tim. 3:4 & Titus 2:7). So we see that old and young, men and women, all are to show forth a semnos life. Those are the only places these words are found in the New Testament, except our verse in Philippians 4:8:

and notice they all occur in 1 Tim. and Titus. As we ponder such a word as this, we are the more thankful that the Apostle begins this exhortation with that sweet word: “Brothers!” It is as though he would encourage our fainting hearts, that might feel such a word is so utterly beyond us.

And yet we are “kings and priests unto God and His Father,” (Rev. 1:6) and so is it unreasonable to exhort us to ponder the kingliness and holiness that should mark us out? I know well there is but One of whom it can be said:

There is but One who is “fairer than the children of men,” (Psa. 45:2) and He is the One of whom it is said: “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever” (Heb. 1:8). And of Him it is written: “God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Heb. 1:9) (Psa. 45).

And yet, “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18). Thus it is we also can become, in some small measure, semnos men and women. So, as we meditate on whatsoever is semnos, we will find it takes us straight to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Every step of His path through this world, as we see Him in the four Gospels, shows forth the only truly semnos Man.

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The third subject for our meditation is “whatsoever-(things are) just” (vs. 8). The word may be either righteous or just. Notice that “The Holy One and the Just” (Acts 3:14) needs no other name to tell who is meant: for there is but one (Acts 3:14). More striking still, it was needless for Stephen to tell his enemies who “the Just One” was: for their own consciences told them (Acts 7:52). And Saul of Tarsus had learned that Name from Ananias, at the time of his conversion (Acts 22:14); if he had not already learned it from Stephen. With men righteousness may repel rather than attract. Scarcely for a righteous man will one die, though peradventure for a good man, some would even dare to die: but with our Lord it is different. With Him “righteousness and peace have kissed each other,” (Psa. 85:10); and it is because He is righteous that we know there is no judgment for us, since He has born it all, and righteousness will not demand payment of the debt twice over.

We meditated recently on epieikeia— gentleness, yieldingness: and we saw that it was one of the special marks of our Lord. Perhaps that is partly why His righteousness attracts, rather than repels. And you recall we are to let our epieikeia be known unto all men. But our justice must also be known: not hard, cruel justice, that demands the last cent: but justice that is always fair, and always “plays the game.” I recall a Chinese customs officer in China passing the baggage of a Christian without opening it, “Because,” he explained to the others who had to open theirs, “a Christian would not do anything that was not right.” I wonder if we all would measure up to the standard set by that Chinese man, who may not have been a Christian himself? But most assuredly we should. Whether it is the customs, whether it is the postage on a letter, whether it is keeping the rules of the road when driving: in all these things let us be scrupulously just. It has distressed me very much to see a Christian send a letter in an unsealed envelope, at perhaps half the proper price: or make a false declaration on a customs form, to save duty to the friend receiving the parcel. Were we habitually meditating on “whatsoever things are just” (vs. 8) we would not do such things. And you young people who may read these lines, let me beseech you, if you are followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be absolutely honest and fair in all you do: your school work, your games, or whatever it is. I remember an old missionary in inland China whom the shop-keepers used to call, “Jesus.” They knew no better. But what a challenge to that man to behave in a way that would bring honor, and not shame, on that worthy name he bore! And you bear that same name, if you are a Christian: for you “have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Seek by His grace to bring honor on Christ’s Name.

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“Whatsoever- (things are) pure” (vs. 8).

Our school motto was: “Beati Mundo Corde”: the Latin for, “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Matt. 5:8). It world be hard to find a more suitable, or a more beautiful, motto for a boys’ school. How did we measure up to it, bearing in mind that purity begins with our thoughts? How do we today measure up to it, when we think of it in this way? As we look around on all the filth about us in this filthy world, through which we must pass, we might be utterly discouraged, and say that God had set before us an impossible standard, that He does not expect us to meet. Let not such a thought find lodgment with us.

In the days of old there were various creatures which the people of Israel might not eat, for they were unclean: there were others that were clean. There were two marks by which a clean fish was known: it must have both fins and scales. The fins let it swim against the stream. There is a spot on the Columbia River where you may stand and watch the great fish leap up rapids, or small falls, several feet high. Similarly God has provided a power whereby you and I may “swim against the stream.” But there are times when a fish must swim through filthy water: and to protect it, God has given it scales: which I suppose are shut up together as with a close seal. One is so near another, that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another, they stick together that they cannot be sundered.’ (Job 41:15-17). And, fitted with this armor, the fish can pass in safety through the filth. So God has provided a way for His Own to pass unscathed through all the filth around us: as well as the power to go against the stream.

It is perfectly true that we still have the flesh within us that loves sin. The natural heart of the believer is deceitful above all things, and incurable. (Jer. 17:9, New Translation). It is when we learn that our hearts, by nature, are like a rotten egg, so bad they cannot be worse, and so bad they can never be made better, that we realize the truth of the word: ‘Ye must be born again.’ It is then we will give up our efforts to improve, and cast ourselves wholly on the Lord. It is of the believer it is written: “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Gal. 5:17). But notice well the correct ending of that verse: “So that ye might not do the things that ye would,” not— “that ye cannot.” Thank God, we have the Spirit to oppose the flesh; and are not called to fight the battle in our own strength. The old poem says truly:

And as face answers to face in water, so does the heart of man to man. What a hopeless outlook it seems to be! And yet the same old hymn continues, and does so truly:

It is true that this describes our standing before God, even now, down here. It is true that we do fail: but even so the Spirit of God does speak of our “pure minds,” (2 Peter 3:1), and He does say: “Love one another with a pure heart fervently,” (1 Peter 1:22), and He does tell us that “Unto the pure all things are pure” (Titus 1:15). Our Lord Jesus used the word `good’ relatively. He said, “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things” (Matt. 12:35). Yet He said again, speaking absolutely, not relatively: “There is none good but one, that is God” (Mark 10:18) (Matt. 19:17).

It may be in a somewhat similar way the Spirit of God speaks of whatsoever things are pure. It is true we must each one say with Paul: “I count not myself to have apprehended:” (ch. 3:13) but let us also say with Paul, “But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, down to the goal I press!” The priests in the tabernacle had to wash at the brazen laver every time they went into the tabernacle, or came near the altar to minister. (Ex. 30:18-21). It was thus they kept themselves clean. It meant they must wash in water many times a day, and thus with the `water of the Word’ we obey the admonition, “Keep thyself pure” (1 Tim. 5:22).

Let us never lower God’s standard to meet our weakness: but rather let us press on, with our eyes fixed on the Goal: on our Lord Himself. Let us CONSIDER HIM (Heb. 12:3). Another has said, “The first look at Christ gives life, and every after-look the power of living.” And old Richard Baxter said truly: “For every look at self take ten at Christ.”

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling (stumbling), and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 24-25).

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Now we come to one of the loveliest of all the subjects on which we are to meditate: “Whatsoever-(things are) lovely,” (vs. 8) or “loveable.”

Excellent as it is to meditate on whatsoever is true and noble, just and pure, they often condemn us so greatly that they leave us sad and discouraged: but when we meditate on whatsoever is lovely or lovable, it fills our hearts with peace and joy.

Again the Greek word we are to consider is found in no other place in the New Testament; and again not very easy to translate accurately. It is said to tell of whatever provokes, or calls forth, love. And you will remember that is one of the things unto which we may provoke one another (Heb. 10:24). “Consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.” If we heed our verse in Philippians, if we meditate on whatsoever provokes to love, we will know better how to provoke one another in this blessed way. Alas, too often we provoke one another to hard and bitter thoughts, by faultfinding and unkind, perhaps even unfair, criticism. It is so easy to find fault with one’s fellow-believers, but spirituality and the love of Christ in our hearts will see their graces and good points. Then we will think of them as loved of the Father and given by Him to Christ, as accepted and beautiful in His sight. And let us remember there are some unlovely things in ourselves.

When I was a child a brother went from our little meeting (where everybody knew and loved each other) to a large meeting in a big city. He wrote back complaining of the lack of love. Years later I came across the letter my father wrote in reply. He reminded the brother of the old pump we had and that at times it would not give any water, no matter how hard you pumped. But, if you would pour a pail of water down the pump, “prime it” as we used to say, then you could get all the water you wanted: and so, he added, “pour in a little love and see what happens.” Yes, “Love begets love.” And if we want to meditate on lovely, or lovable things, let us pour in a little love, and the result may surprise us, as we discover how much there is in the saints to call forth our love.

After our first five years in China, we had been home 2 or 3 weeks, and the children were terribly homesick for the dear Chinese people they loved so well: they had not seen one. On a snowy afternoon in February, we were walking down a quiet street, when suddenly the children saw a Chinese man with a big box on a hand-sleigh delivering laundry. He was old, and stooped, he had lost most of his teeth, and was about as ugly an old man as you could find. His arms were filled with parcels of laundry he was about to deliver. The children saw him, and instantly all four rushed across the street and started talking to him. He was so amazed to hear these fair-haired little ones talking in his own tongue wherein he was born, that he dropped the laundry in the snow and did not trouble to pick it up; and the five of them had a really good time together. My little daughter of eight came back, and as she took my hand again, she looked up with a great sigh of satisfaction and said: “O Daddy, isn’t he perfectly lovely!” I understood, and so replied, “Yes, Darling, he surely is!” Love has that wondrous power to turn unlovely things into both lovely and loveable ones.

I think we may be surprised how many lovely things there are on which we may mediate. A little child called, “Oh, come quickly! The gates of Heaven are open wide, and all the glory’s shining through!” She had found something very lovely in a beautiful sunset. “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). And sometimes (if we have eyes to see it) His glory does “shine through.” To us, His own, who know His love, He gives all these things richly to enjoy. (1 Tim. 6:17). And they tell us not only of His glory, but also of His love, which provided them: and thus we may truly count them amongst the “lovely things” on which we are to meditate.

But there is better yet: though there is so much that is truly loveable in the Lord’s own people, and so much that is lovely in His handiwork; we must turn our eyes elsewhere to behold the only One who is “altogether lovely” (Song of Sol. 5:16). No flaw or disappointment we will ever find in Him, as we may in all else below; and yet, strange as it may seem, there was a time when we saw in Him “no beauty that we should desire Him” (Isa. 53:2). But now, through His infinite grace, we may say: “My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord” (Psa. 104:34)

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“Whatsoever-(things are) of good report” (or, “sweet-to-speak-of”).

The words ‘of-good-report’ translate only one Greek word: euphemo. It is found only here in the New Testament, though a similar word, formed from it, is found in 2 Cor. 6:8, linked with its opposite: and they are translated: “by evil report and good report” (2 Cor. 6:8). The word is not easy to translate accurately. It has been suggested that ‘sweet-to-speak-of; winning; winsome; gracious; attractive’ give to some extent the true meaning. There is an example from the Classics said to mean: ‘putting the most favorable construction on the account’. I think that helps greatly to understand the meaning we seek.

I believe this to be a most important exhortation, and one of the most solemn of all in this verse 8. It is not unlike the one before it: “Whatsoever things are lovely, or loveable.” Oh, that we might have our minds occupied with such things! Oh, that we might meditate on the gracious, winsome things in the saints, and in others about us! Oh, that we might put the most favorable construction on every report we hear. Love thinketh no evil. Love believeth all things: not the evil things, but the good ones: and where it cannot actually believe all the good it would like, it, at least hopeth all things: it hopes the good report is true, and the evil one false.

Notice there is not the slightest suggestion we should meditate on the evil report: but only on the good. A Scripture that might go well with this part of our verse is 1 Peter 4:8: “Above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins.” With the sins and evil reports covered by love, we will be free to meditate on whatsoever things are of good report.

This does not, of course, mean that we are to make light of evil, or go on with it. But evil that is dealt with in true love, will win the erring one again, instead of driving him further away. I recall two brothers who were deputed to go to a brother who had turned aside, and tell him he could no longer partake at the Lord’s table. When they reached the brother’s home, they both broke down, and could not speak for weeping. That was a more eloquent plea to turn from his evil course than any words could be: and that dear brother was restored.

We have been considering the word euphemos, gracious, or, good report. Its opposite is dusphemos, which means ‘slanderous’. Do you know the literal meaning of the word that is nearly always translated `devil’ in the English Bible? The literal meaning is `slanderer’, and it is so translated in 2 Tim. 3:11. True, it is a different word to dusphemos (the opposite of the word we have been considering) but the meaning is very much the same. Those who slandered Paul in 2 Cor. 6:8 were, I doubt not, persons who were Christians— at least in name. And you remember we saw in Philippians 1 that there were those who `preached Christ’ out of envy and strife, hoping to add affliction to Paul’s bonds.

And our hearts are no better than the hearts of the saints of old: and it is not unknown for us to meditate on things of evil report; and the next result is of course to speak evil of the one concerned, for out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks; and so we become 'slanderers', and are doing the devil's own work— helping him. We all do well to remember the Bible says: "Put them in mind to speak evil of no man" (Titus 3:1-2). And again, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren" (James 4:11).

A friend of mine felt keenly that he had this evil habit, and as a remedy had a text made to hang exactly opposite his place at the dinner table, with the words: "The brother for whom Christ died" (1 Cor. 8:11). How slow we would be to listen to, or to meditate on, or to repeat evil reports of a brother, if we remembered these few words, and kept in mind how Christ loves him. Another Scripture we might remember is Prov. 25:23: "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue." That, I doubt not, is the Lord's way to treat most of the evil reports about the saints of God. But how lovely to see that in Philippians it speaks nothing at all about the evil side: it does not suggest that a saint of God might speak evil: but it only directs our hearts and thoughts to what is good.

But we may not leave this lovely theme of meditation without recalling the very best report that ever came to this poor, sad, sin-sick world: such a Report that we write it with a capital "R" (Isa. 53:1). And what was the result? The One who sent it must ask, "Who hath believed our Report?" (Rom. 10:16). You and I know the answer: how pitifully few there are who believe and meditate on this Report! Such a good report, yet so few believed it! It is the Report of One Who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. This is the best, and the most wonderful Report this world has ever heard: and so it claims first place in our meditations on "whatever things are of good report." And thus again, we find our verse leads us once more to our adorable Lord and Savior, and there is none so 'sweet-to-speak-of' as He!

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The form of expression changes now: stead of "whatsoever...." we get, "If there be...." "If (there be) any virtue." The word translated virtue is used in the New Testament only here and three times in Peter. We might think it strange Paul so carefully avoids the use of this word; for it is one that is full of life and meaning. The Greek word comes from one that means "a warlike spirit," which in turn gave the idea of manhood and bravery: and this in the eyes of the Greeks was the greatest virtue: but in the eyes of Him Who is meek and lowly in heart there are other virtues that excel this. Perhaps it is for this reason Paul only uses it here. Our English word virtue comes from a Latin word meaning manliness, strength, courage: compare our English word virile. And because these qualities were also admired by the Romans, it also came to mean excellence, goodness: so virtue corresponds very closely to the Greek word it translates in our verse. It is true that now virtue has lost the meaning of courage, and has come to mean "moral excellence," though it still retains the meaning of power: we speak of the virtue of a medicine, meaning its power.

Mr. Darby calls this virtue, "spiritual courage," or "moral energy." The Christian life is a warfare.

From the day we are converted, till the day we leave this world, the Christian life is one long, hard fight. "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). And how carefully the Word describes the armor of God for us. (Eph. 6; Rom. 13:12; 2 Cor. 6:7). In 2 Peter 1:5, we are told to add to our faith virtue: the same word we have been considering. The first thing we need after faith, is courage courage to confess Jesus as our Lord. How often the Word tells us: "Be strong and of a good courage" (Josh. 1:18). Seven times Joshua was given this command when he was to lead the people into the promised land. And if we are to take possession of the heavenly blessings promised us, we too must have this "virtue," of "spiritual courage" and "moral energy." And I doubt not the way to get it is by meditating upon it. How we see this "virtue" in many of the martyrs!

But once again we may see that the only One who had this virtue in perfection is our Lord Jesus Christ. Read the Gospels: read how fearlessly He met His enemies. How fearlessly He cured on the Sabbath, well knowing the hatred it would bring: and above all read the story of the "trial" and the death of our Savior, and there we will see aretes, "virtues," in its perfection. May the Lord give us to be more like our Lord and Master in this wondrous quality. Meanwhile let us meditate more upon it: upon Him.

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And finally we come to the eighth and last of this blessed list of subjects for meditation: "If (there be) any praise, on these-(things) meditate." I doubt not our first thought should be with regard to the praise of God: "Whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2:29). When we get the praise of men, then we have our reward. (Matt. 6:1-6). The Greek word used for "reward" is apecho, and expresses the same meaning as our words: "Paid in full." When the hypocrites did their alms, they sounded a trumpet before them, that they might have glory of men: and thus their reward was "Paid in full" (Deissmann). We do not want this sort of praise.

But how the Lord delights to encourage our hearts with a word of praise; and when He brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: "then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:5). How encouraging this is! Just think, there is with every one of the Lord's own, even the ones who are hardest to get on with, something in the counsels of his heart, which the Lord can, and will, praise.

But we must not forget there was a brother, whose name we do not know, whose praise in the gospel was in all the churches. (2 Cor. 8:18). I am sure he did not seek that praise, but he was a man whom the Lord delighted to honor. So while ever seeking first the praise of God, we need not, I judge, be entirely without regard to our brethren's praise also. But let us also remember how easy it is to have eyes turned towards men, rather than to our Lord alone: and also remember, "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

But the day is coming soon when some of His servants will hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:23). And that "well done" is worth more than all the earthly praise that ever was given. May my reader, and the writer, have the unspeakable joy of hearing those words from their Master's lips! May the Lord help us to think on, meditate on, "calculate" these eight things: whatsoever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, things of virtue, and of praise!

In verse 8 we have just contemplated those eight wondrous subjects of meditation: those eight things on which we are to meditate, or think, or calculate. Now, in verse 9 we hear of those things which we are to do.

"What-(things) ye both learned, and received, and heard, and saw in me, these-(things) practice: and the God-of-peace shall-be with you."

Verse 8 ended thus: “Meditate on these things” (1 Tim. 4:15). We must remember that the punctuation was not in the old Greek manuscripts, from which we have the Scriptures: and it may be that verse 9 should continue straight on from verse 8, without a break; so it would read something in this way: “Meditate on these things, which things also ye learned, and received, and heard, and saw in me: these things practice.” I believe the Greek may be translated either this way, or as we find it in the Authorized Version. (See Bagster’s new Interlinear New Testament.) If this translation is the way the Spirit of God intends us to read this passage, it would tell us that they had already learned, received, heard, and seen these eight lovely qualities in Paul himself: and I doubt not this was true. If the usual translation is the correct one, it would not refer back to these things in verse 8, but to the general “manner of life” they knew in Paul, and that doubtless would include all in the previous verse.

Whichever way is correct, it is quite plain that the Lord is telling us that not only are we to hear and meditate: but also to do. How often the Lord exhorts us to be doers of the Word, and not hearers only (James 1:22): the man who built on the sand, heard but did not do. But the one who built on the rock, both heard and practiced. An example goes very much further than an exhortation; and an example is just what Paul could give to the Philippian saints. We may see all four of these exhortations spoken of in Paul’s epistles. To the Ephesians he wrote: “Ye have not so learned Christ” (Eph. 4:20). To the Colossians: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6); or to the Thessalonians he could speak of “the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thess. 3:6). To the Colossians again he wrote: “The hope of the gospel which ye have heard” (Col. 1:23). And to the Philippians themselves he could speak of the conflict “which ye saw in me” (ch. 1:30). There are many other examples we might refer to: but these will illustrate how we each one must have experienced in some measure, from some of the servants of the Lord, these four things. Now, let us do them. And “The God of peace shall be with you” (vs. 9). This is far more than even the “peace of God,” which we saw in verse 7, as the Divine Sentinel to guard our hearts and thoughts. This is the Divine Guest Himself, Who will come and “make His home in your hearts,” as Eph. 3:17 has been rendered. It reminds us of John 14:23, where to the one who keeps the Lord’s words, He promises: “My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23). And the word for abode is the very same as that used for the many mansions of which He tells us in the second verse.

We see the heart and thoughts guarded from evil by the peace of God; then we see the heart furnished with the true and pure and lovely “furniture” of verse 8 and then we see the thoughts turned into acts: acts such as they had seen in the beloved Apostle himself: acts, which doubtless kept our Lord’s words; and the crowning result: the glorious climax (if we may so speak), the God of peace Himself comes to take up His abode in that heart prepared for Him. We spoke of Him as the Divine Guest: but another has said: “not as a Guest, precariously detained, but as a Master, resident in His proper home.”

May it be so, Beloved, with you and with me!

Finally, brethren,

whatsoever things

are true,

... are honest,

... are just,

... are pure,

... are lovely,

... are of good report,

if there be

any virtue,

.... any praise,

think on these things.

Philippians 4:8

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 41: Initiated

“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

“But I-rejoiced in (the) Lord greatly that now at-length ye-have-bloomed-again in-thinking on-behalf-of me, though indeed ye-did also think, but had-no-opportunity. Not that I-speak on-account-of want, for I have-learned in whatever-(circumstances) I-am, to-be content. I-know both to-be-brought-low, I-know also to-run-over: in every-(matter) and in all-(circumstances) I-have-been-initiated (or, I-have-been-taught-the-secret) both to-be-filled (or, to-have-plenty) and to-be-hungry, both to-run-over (or, abound) and to-be-in-want. I-have-strength-for all-(things) in the-(One) empowering me.”

Philippians 4:10-13

“But I-rejoiced in (the) Lord greatly that now at-length ye-have-bloomed-again in-thinking on-behalf-of me, though indeed ye did also think, but had-no-opportunity” (Phil. 4:10).

The letter is drawing to a close, and we come now to what was perhaps the main cause of its being written: even to acknowledge the gifts that the saints in Philippi had sent to Paul by Epaphroditus. We do not know what these gifts were: but we do know they caused great joy to the heart of the dear prisoner at Rome.

More than fifty years ago I recall a letter being read in a gathering of the Lord's people in which the first part of the words above were quoted. As I recall, the old brother who wrote the letter was thanking for a gift that had been sent him by this gathering of saints. It was a good many years since they had sent him a gift: as they had been offended by some plain speaking: and the rift had sorely wounded the old brother's heart: not that he desired a gift, but he yearned over these saints. But at last there was real repentance, and shame at their conduct; and the old brother rejoiced greatly that now at length they had bloomed again in thinking of him; and that the old happy fellowship was restored once again.

Paul's great joy was perhaps similar, but the reason he had not received a gift from the Philippian saints was from an entirely different cause: they lacked the opportunity. As far as I know we have no knowledge how long it was since their last gift: but were the time long or short, the delay was not from any lack of love or desire: and now at almost the cost of a brother's life, they sent once again to him.

"Now at-length ye-have-bloomed-again in-thinking on-behalf-of-me, though indeed ye-did also think, but had-no-opportunity" (Phil. 4:10).

Here we get a new application of the word to think, a word we have already had before us eight times: making ten times in all. This does not include verse 8, chapter 4, which, as we saw, is a different word. In the second chapter we translated it: "Have this mind in you." And the Greek word does point to our mind. They had Paul in their mind. You remember in chapter 1:7 we had the expression, "I have you in my heart," (ch. 1:7) and we saw it could also mean they had Paul in their heart. This, I think, is somewhat the same. Now, at length, this thought had bloomed again in such a way as to produce this very practical fruit. The word translated 'bloomed' is a beautiful figure of a tree sprouting, and blooming afresh in spring (Vaughan). It is only used here in the New Testament.

The Apostle quickly adds, so that there might be no thought of upbraiding them— "though indeed ye did also think, but had no opportunity." The thought of him had been there all the time, but the opportunity to act was lacking. These fresh gifts from the saints in Philippi stirred memories of the beginning of the gospel in Europe, when these same saints had sent once and again to his want, when he was at Thessalonica. And Paul rejoices "greatly." It is the only place in Scripture where this particular word is found. We have seen that Paul uses the word "rejoice" eleven times, and joy five times, in this Epistle. This is the last; and it seems as though it is the greatest. It seems right that he who had taught them to rejoice in the Lord, should himself excel in this characteristic. And what joy it must have given the hearts of his brethren so well beloved, to know that they had been the cause of his great joy.

"Not that I-speak on-account-of want, for I have-learned in whatever-(circumstances) I-am, to-be-content." (Literally, to-be-self-sufficing, as a country that needs no imports, but supplies everything it requires.). (Phil. 4:11).

Paul would not want them to think he was speaking from covetousness, or suggesting that he had been suffering because they had not sent sooner unto his need, as though he hoped they might send further gifts. For it is not easy to write of such matters: on the one hand to express the deep gratitude that is in the heart, and at the same time avoid any suggestion of covetousness. These verses are a very beautiful example of the Lord's own way to write such a letter.

The Apostle continues by telling us a lesson he had learned— contentment in all circumstances. It did not come to him naturally: but need learning: and it is a lesson we all of us need to learn: the lesson of being content, yet independent of men. I have heard one say: "So you are an independent missionary?" And I have heard the reply: "Independent of men, but very dependent on God." And if we depend truly on Him, we are content with whatever He may send: whether it be want or whether it be abundance. Let us remember, "Jehovah.... said.... I am El Shaddai,"— 'the God Who is sufficient.' (Gen. 17:1, Literal). It is a very blessed lesson, but one we are very slow to learn: for it is so easy to lean on the visible, rather than on the Invisible. This is the only place in the New Testament where we find this word, 'self-sufficing'.

"I-know both to-be-brought-low, I-know also to-run-over" (Phil. 4:12)

It was perhaps no very uncommon thing for Paul to be brought low: to be in want. He seems to have learned this lesson well. And I think very probably it is a lesson that every true servant of Christ may need to learn. I recall a time when we were having lessons in this class in the school of God, and then it was we discovered the wondrous preciousness of the word poor in the Psalms: something we probably would never have otherwise known.

There are a number of reasons why the servant of God should tread this path: and perhaps the first is that then we learn, as perhaps in no other way, the faithfulness, the love, and the power of God. When the earthly props are removed, then we find out what a wondrous thing it is to lean on the Father's arm: on the arm of El Shaddai the Lord God Almighty— "the God Who is Enough."

There may be apparent causes for being in want: but always let us remember it is the Lord who allows it. It may be that the saints of God have not learned the privilege and blessedness of having fellowship in the gospel in this very practical way: or they may not realize that it is the Lord's own order that "they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel"

(1 Cor. 9:14). Then, again, there are saints today who are just as truly ready, as those dear Philippian saints were, to give to their power, yea, and beyond their power (2 Cor. 8:1-3): but like them also, they lack opportunity; circumstances make it impossible. And I grieve to say there may be those from whom the Lord's servants may not be free to accept gifts, as in the case of Paul and the assembly at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:7-12).

One of the saddest reasons of all for the Lord's servant being in want is that at times evil reports are spread about him. If they are true, it is better for him to withdraw from such public service, rather than disgrace the Name of his Master. But there are times when ignorance or misunderstanding of facts; or a careless, exaggerated story lightly told; or even jealousy, can spread reports, not true, that do untold harm to the Lord's servants and to the Lord's work. Paul himself knew something of this, as we may see from 2 Corinthians. The Lord's servant may be far away, and without opportunity to correct false statements; or even without knowledge of the stories spread, so we need to be careful that there is adequate proof before we accept or help to spread such matters. All these things help to teach the servant of God the same lessons that Paul tells us he had learned. They are lessons that must be learned, they do not come to us naturally. And like the little children at

school, sometimes the lessons are learned with tears.

But there is another side to this question. Paul made it his boast that he kept himself from being burdensome (2 Cor. 11:9-10): and there are some who walk in Paul's footsteps in this matter even to this day. As you know, he supported not only himself, but those laboring with him, by making tents (Acts 20:34; 18:3). If my memory serves me rightly, the Moravian missionaries in the old days sought as far as possible to walk according to this rule: and experience taught them that medical doctors were specially suited for this. You remember that at times a certain doctor traveled with Paul, and helped in the gospel.

It is a remarkable thing that (as far as I can recall), the assembly at Philippi is the only one of which we have any record of sending gifts to Paul; unless it was the "barbarians" in Melita: though I always rejoice to see that when he wrote the epistle to the Romans he was guest of Gaius; and I think this means that his tents and his tools were, for the time being, put away. I hope it also means that the two epistles to the Corinthians had done their work and that now at last the Apostle was free to accept the fellowship of hospitality from one brother, at least, in that assembly.

You may have noticed how many unusual words we have in these verses, and there are more to follow.

The form of the sentence we are considering— "I know both to-be-brought-low, I know also to-run-over"— is said not to occur anywhere else in the Greek New Testament. (Vaughan). Is the reason that we have so many rare words and constructions in this portion of Scripture, that the subject of giving thanks for a gift is such a rare one? But the knowledge to be brought low, or to abound, is surely rare; and possibly to know how to abound is the more rare.

The story is told of a beloved servant of the Lord who, in his own right, was very wealthy. One night in the prayer meeting he asked prayer for a brother who had had a great calamity. A friend walking home with him inquired who the brother was for whom they had been praying. He replied, "Myself." "Oh," the other asked, "If it is not too inquisitive, may I know what the calamity is?" "I have just had word of a large legacy that has been left to me and the responsibility to use it aright is so heavy." I believe that brother had learned the lesson how to abound. He and his devoted wife had a large and beautiful home in London, where they lived on the top floor, devoting the rest of the house to the Lord's people who were in need. My mother has told me how her widowed mother, with a young family, homeless for Christ's sake, are taken into that home and tenderly cared for. But these are lessons that we may see in perfection only in Him Who was rich, yet for our sakes became poor. How it bows our hearts in adoration to know that "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8).

In Philippians 2:8 we had the very same word: "to run low"; but there it is He Himself who made Himself low. It is one of those amazing steps downward that we saw our Lord voluntarily take, for our sakes. So if we, like Paul, must learn the lesson of being brought low: let us remember our Lord knows all about it: He has walked that road before us; and none ever went so low as He.

"In every-(matter) and in all-(circumstances) I-have-been-initiated (or, I-have-been-taught-the-secret) both to-be-filled (or, to-have-plenty) and to-be-hungry, both to-run-over (or, abound) and to-be-in-want" (Phil. 4:12).

"I have been initiated" is another word found nowhere else in Scripture. It comes from the same root as our word mystery. It was used of the secret religious rites of paganism: and of the initiation into them. These were jealously guarded from common knowledge, like Freemasonry today; and admission into these secrets was sought by people of all kinds, from Roman emperors downward: with the special hope of freedom from evil in this life and the next. Paul's use of this word to supply language for Christian experience is very suggestive. The knowledge of the peace of God, of utter contentment, is indeed an open secret, open to 'whosoever will' learn of Him'. But it is a secret, a mystery, none the less. (See Moule).

`I-have-been-initiated is in the perfect passive, suggestive of the work of Another, who with pains and care initiated him; and also of the abiding character of the initiation. It is a secret all believers may learn: but it must be learned. I think it tells of self-denial; and earnest, fervent prayer; of diligently keeping ourselves from the entanglements of this life: and these may be legitimate affairs: but affairs that have lost their attraction to 'the initiated'.

"In every matter and in all circumstances" is literally: "In every(thing) and in all-(things)". This is another rare construction. In Gal. 1:1, we get a plural and a singular together; not of things, but of men. Here, in Philippians, I think the thought is that in every separate thing, and in all collected circumstances of life, Paul had been initiated. It is somewhat the same as we had in verse 6, "In everything by prayer.... let your requests be made known unto God." 'Everything' sees all together: 'your request' sees each individual request alone by itself.

"I-have-been-initiated both to-be-filled and to-be-hungry, both to-run-over and to-be-in-want." Perhaps not many of us in the more favored lands of `the West' know much about the secret of learning to be hungry: but many of our brethren in 'the East' have learned this lesson thoroughly. It was a lesson our Lord Himself had learned. See Luke 4:2; Mark 11:12, and ponder Matthew 25:35 & 42. We might do well to remember that there is another hunger described in Matt. 5:6, into which we all would do well to become initiated.

"I-have-strength-for all-(things) in the-(One) empowering me" (Phil. 4:13). What wonderful words to come from a man in prison, one who was apparently in most abject circumstances, and in no small danger: one who was unable to do anything, as men would say. But faith speaks according to God, and the one who could do nothing, in the judgment of others, is the very one who could say he had strength for all things:— not in himself, truly, but— in the One empowering him. The word translated 'empowering' is the word from which we get dynamite and dynamo; what mighty power is expressed in each of those words: but the One who empowered Paul was mightier than all dynamite and all dynamos. He is the One who could say: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth." And therefore we are to go into all the world and preach the gospel. And it is because all power is given unto Christ that we may take up Paul's language (for we have the very same One to empower us) and say: "I have strength for all things in the One empowering me." Our Lord Jesus said truly: "Without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). But here we have the other side: "In the One empowering" us, we can do all things.

"People sometimes say, 'We are such poor things we can do nothing.' This may sound very humble, but it is not Christianity. Paul's Christ is ours, and His strength avails for us as it did for him. He never sends any a warfare at their own charges. If He calls you to pursue a certain path, or to do a certain work for Him, He will give you strength for both. His commands are all enablings. This triumphant note in closing the epistle to the Philippians contrasts with the closing words of the Thessalonian epistles. There it is the coming of the Lord; here it is the work,

the warfare, and the triumphs and trials and difficulties. He is in full harness, still pressing on in the fight, and singing as he advances, because he knows God is with him, and Christ's strength is sufficient for him" (Lincoln).

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"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness"

(Col. 1:11).

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 42: Full and Running Over

"Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things (which were sent) from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father (be) glory forever and ever. Amen."

"Notwithstanding you-did well becoming-partakers-together-with me in my (the) tribulation. But you also, O-Philippians, you-know that in (the) beginning of-the gospel, when I-came-out from Macedonia, not-one assembly partook-with me (or, had-fellowship-with me) as-to (the) matter of-giving and receiving, but only you alone; for even in Thessalonica both once and twice you-sent to-me unto my (the) need. Not that I-am-seeking-after the gift, but I-am-seeking-after the fruit, the (fruit) abounding unto your account. But I-have-to-the-full all-(things) and I-am-running-over; I-have-been-filled-full, having-received from Epaphroditus the-(things) from you, an odor of-fragrance, a-sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to-God. But my God will-fill-full every need of-yours, according-to His wealth, in glory, in Christ Jesus. Now unto our God and Father (be) all the glory unto the ages of-the ages. Amen."

Philippians 4:14-20

"Notwithstanding you did well becoming-partakers-together-with me in my tribulation" (4:14)

In chapter 4, verse 10, the Apostle first mentions the gift that the saints in Philippi had sent to him: "your care of me," (vs. 10) he calls it. If we are writing to thank for a gift we usually speak of the gift first, before any other matter: but the Apostle leaves it till the end.

After referring in this way to the gift, and to his rejoicing in the Lord because of their care for him, he breaks off this subject to tell them that he did not speak in respect of want, as though he would be glad of more gifts: (though indeed he may very possibly have been in want): for he had learned the lesson to be content, whether full or hungry, whether he abounded, or suffered need: and so he makes it plain he was not seeking after a gift. Indeed, he takes the greatest pains to make it clear it was no question of covetousness. Compare this with Acts 20:33: "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." How utterly different to the appeals for gifts that we so often see and hear today. How rare is the spirit of the Apostle! But it was not the gift so much that made Paul rejoice: but the love that made these dear saints become partakers with his afflictions. It is not everybody who is willing to have it known that he is a friend of a man in jail: but, like Onesiphorus in a little later day, these saints oft refreshed him, and they were not ashamed of his chain. (2 Tim. 1:16). The Lord is careful to record the fact that the saints to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was written not only suffered reproaches and afflictions, but also became companions, of them that were so used, and he adds; "For ye had compassion of me in my bonds" (Heb. 10:34).

These cases being so carefully recorded for us, tell us how precious in the sight of God is participation in tribulation for the sake of the gospel. Paul needed to exhort Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but "be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel," or, "suffer evil along with the glad tidings" (2 Tim. 1:8, New Translation). Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: and so did the saints in Philippi. And the Spirit says to them: "Ye did well," or, as it may be translated: "Ye did nobly."

"But you also, O-Philippians, you-know that in (the) beginning of the gospel, I came-out from Macedonia, not-one assembly partook with me (or, had-fellowship-with me) as to (the)-matter of-giving and receiving, but only you alone; for even in Thessalonica once and twice you-sent unto my need" (4:15-16).

It is striking that (as far as I can recall) Philippi is the only assembly of the many founded by Paul of whom it is recorded that they shared with him in his daily needs. On the contrary, in speaking to the elders of Ephesus the Apostle tells them: "Ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them with me" (Acts 20:34). And it is no light matter to minister to the needs of a party as large as those sometimes with Paul. Can you not see the Apostle stretch out those work-worn hands, hard and calloused with tent-making, as he speaks of "these hands"?

And writing to the Thessalonians he says: "Ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail: for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (1 Thess. 2:9). And ponder 2 Cor. 11:7-10: "Have I committed an offense in debasing myself.... because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia."

I do not know that he refused gifts from any assembly except Corinth: and we must remember that Paul says it was "in the beginning of the gospel," (vs. 15) that is, I presume, in the early days of the gospel in Europe, "not one assembly had fellowship with me as to the matter of giving and receiving." It is possible that later on some of the other assemblies did have fellowship with him in this way. But Paul tells us that his 'reward' for preaching the gospel is, "When I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge" (1 Cor. 9:18). That seems to have been the principle on which Paul labored generally; but the assembly at Philippi was a very bright exception: for from them again and

again he received gifts.

And we must notice that Paul makes a difference between gifts to himself personally, and gifts to the poor, as those in Jerusalem. He encourages the Corinthian assembly to give to the collection for these poor saints: though he will accept nothing for himself. And we must also notice that Paul acknowledges his indebtedness to many individuals; though Philippi seems to be the only assembly that ministered to him thus. Nor may we forget that gifts of money are only one way in which we may have fellowship with the Lord's servants. How many are deeply indebted to the saints for hospitality, given without grudging. I think Lydia is the first Paul speaks of: (unless we count his fifteen day visit with Peter): and she lived in Philippi. But `Gaius mine host' lived in Corinth. (Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14); and it is lovely to see that though he would not accept fellowship from the assembly, he gladly acknowledges it from an individual: and one hopes it means that things were in a better state in Corinth. Other helpers of whom Paul speaks are.— Phoebe, 'a succourer of many, and of myself also' (Rom. 16:2); another was the mother of Rufus: `his mother and mine.' (Rom. 16:13). And what a debt he owed to 'Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus'. (Rom. 16:3-4). Philemon and Apphia are a couple so closely knit in bonds of love that Paul can boldly say, 'Prepare me also a lodging'. (Philem. 1:22). And there was Philip the Evangelist and his four daughters, and Mnason of Cyprus (Acts 21:8 & 16), and doubtless many others whose names are known in Heaven. And so we see in the Apostle's journeying a noble army of "givers," who have shared the reproach and affliction and poverty of the Lord's servants, and they are still with us today: (to how very many am I personally indebted!): to whom I am sure the Lord will say: "Well done! Ye have done nobly!"

We see from these verses in Philippians 4 that Paul had not forgotten the gifts of the Philippians in those early days; probably ten years or more before; indeed the fragrance of them still lingers: "You know also all about those days," he says, "you know that not only did you contribute to my wants after I left Macedonia, but even in Thessalonica (another city of Macedonia, about 90 miles away) before I left your province, you sent once and twice to me." As far as we know Paul was only in Thessalonica for a short time: it might be only three weeks; but of this we are not at all sure: but twice at least in this short time, the saints in Philippi sent gifts to him. And later when he was at the wealthy city of Corinth, far south of Macedonia, and being in real need, it was saints from Macedonia who met that shortage: undoubtedly saints from Philippi, though possibly also from Thessalonica and Berea.

We will, God willing, speak later about the gifts referred to in 2 Cor. 8, when Paul with his fellow-laborers were making a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem: not gifts to Paul himself: and this may have been several years after the saints in Philippi so lovingly sent to him at Thessalonica and Corinth. This occasion is referred to again in Rom. 15:26, etc., "It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."

"Not that I am seeking after the gift, but I am seeking the fruit, the (fruit) abounding unto your account" (4:17).

In another place Paul wrote: "I seek not yours, but you" (2 Cor. 12:14). None could ever accuse the apostle of covetousness. Deeply as Paul valued the gift: greatly as he rejoiced at their remembrance of him having bloomed again: and much needed, as we may suppose the gift to have been: it was not the gift that Paul sought, or that so rejoiced his heart: but the fruit abounding to the account of his dear Philippian brethren.

The object of all labor should be fruit of some kind or other: and the husbandman, laboring first, must be partaker of the fruit; (2 Tim. 2:6, New Translation); though God, in His grace, often lets us reap fruit from other men's labors: "I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labor: other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors" (John 4:38). There was a fruit tree that 'had nothing but leaves', a great show, but no fruit, so quite useless.

Some have large sums to their credit down here; but are miserably poor as regards their account in Heaven: they have little or no fruit garnered up there: and they may find that their toil has produced 'nothing but leaves'. But I recall a dear old saint, a poor widow, who had a long and serious illness. She had a Christian doctor, who gave her the utmost possible care, sparing neither labor nor expense, to help his patient. As she began to recover she thought of her doctor's bill, and became deeply troubled. She begged the doctor to tell her how much she owed. The good doctor replied, "Mrs. S., that's all settled. I carry a little account in the Bank of Heaven; and that took care of it all." I think that doctor never grew rich, but I hope he has a large account in Heaven.

Bishop Moule translates this portion thus: "Not that I am in quest of (almost, 'I am hurting for') the gift, the mere sum of money in and for itself; but I am in quest of the interest that is accumulating to your account." And in a note he adds: "I venture to render these words as above, as a monetary phrase, relating to principal and interest." He adds that Chrysostom, a Greek, seemed to understand it thus.

But we read so much about fruit in the Scriptures that we must not lose sight of it here. In chapter 1 of this Epistle, verse 9-11, the Apostle prays that the saints may "approve things that are excellent.... being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." And surely now in chapter 4 we see this prayer being answered.

Let us not forget that the fruit was to be "unto the glory and praise of God," just as our Lord said to the disciples: "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:8). It was in the very matter of giving that the Apostle wrote: "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully," (2 Cor. 9:6) so Paul was justified in seeking after an abundance of fruit unto their account.

In Philippians 1:22 Paul speaks of "the fruit of my labor" (ch. 1:22). The Scriptures speak of fruit in various senses. For instance, Paul wished to go to Rome that he "might have some fruit among you" (Rom. 1:13). In Matt. 3:8 we read of fruits meet for repentance. This no doubt referred to the general walk and behavior. The fifteenth of John speaks much of fruit: and we do well to give good heed to it: yet at the same time remember the subject is fruit-bearing, and not eternal life. Then we have the fruit of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace," etc., nine lovely graces, yet only spoken of as "fruit," not fruits: for they all have one Source. In John 4:36 we read, "He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal." This fruit would appear to be souls for their hire.

May the Lord grant that you and I may bear much fruit for the glory of the Father: fruit of various kinds, perhaps: but all fruit for Him, and to His glory, that may abound unto our account.

"But I-have-to-the-full, all-(things) and I-am running-over, I-have-been-filled-full, having-received from Epaphroditus the-(things) from you, an odor of-fragrance, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to-God" (Phil. 4:18).

Notice the variety of words the Apostle uses to express how bountifully he was supplied by his beloved brethren from Philippi. I think there are five different words to tell out the bounty and the fullness, and five different words to speak of the want and the poverty with which he had learned to be content.1 The word translated “I-have-to-the-full,” may have exactly the meaning we give it here, or it may be used as a technical term on a receipt, meaning “Received payment”; and if followed by “all things” as here, it has the meaning of “Received payment in full.” But I do not suppose Paul is using it in this technical sense here. But it is not enough for Paul to say, “I have all things to the full”; that tells us his cup is full, but he continues: “and I am running over,” or,

“I am even running over.” The same word is used of the servants in the Father’s house who have “bread enough and to spare” (Luke 15:17). And does not this word take our thoughts back to the 23rd Psalm, “My cup runneth over”? Perhaps the Apostle had this in mind as he wrote.

But still he heaps up another word to express this fullness. This fresh word directs our hearts to the filling: “I have been filled full,” and thence to the one who filled full his needs so abundantly, even Epaphroditus, the one sent by the Philippian saints for this very purpose: “having received from Epaphroditus the very things from you.”

But I think that this beautiful description of fullness should bring to our mind Him in whom “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,” (Col. 2:9) and remind us that in chapter 2, verse 7 we read: “He emptied Himself.” Yes, Beloved, He emptied Himself that we might be “filled full in Him” (Col. 2:9-10)

Now follows immediately the most beautiful description of their gift. I cannot imagine anything described in a more lovely way. There are three short phrases that portray it, but it is only one picture.

The whole is a picture of one of the sacrifices in the Old Testament, perhaps Noah’s sacrifice when he came out of the ark: for Paul uses the very same words to describe the Philippian saints’ “sacrifice,” as the Greek Old Testament uses to describe Noah’s, “an odour of fragrance2.” The same words are used in the Greek Old Testament to describe “sweet savor offerings” in Leviticus, as, for example, Lev. 1:17. And we find exactly the same two words, used in the same way, in Eph. 5:2, of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who “hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor” (Eph. 5:2). Such to God was the gift of these dear Philippian saints: Paul loses sight, so to speak, of the fact that it was given to him, and thinks only of it as being given to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself: and as that sacrifice in days of old went up to God as a sweet smell, or, an odour of fragrance, just so did this gift. And Paul was right: for inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.

But the Apostle continues: “A sacrifice acceptable” (vs. 18). There are a number of sacrifices mentioned in the Scriptures besides those appointed through Moses: sacrifices which we can now offer: in Rom. 12:1 our body is spoken of as a “living sacrifice,” (Rom. 12:1) and this sacrifice is also said to be `acceptable to God’. In Heb. 13:15 we are exhorted to offer “the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name” (Heb. 13:15). Then in the next verse we are told not to forget to offer the sacrifice of “doing good and having fellowship, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.” This is exactly the sacrifice the Philippians had offered, and it is described in almost the same words: “God is well pleased,” (Heb. 13:16) “well-pleasing to God” (vs. 18).

These three sacrifices are ones that almost all can offer, if they do not “forget.” Even a Christian child can offer its body; and its praise, the fruit of its lips; and most children have as much money as the poor widow who offered the two mites, and found it more acceptable to God than all the great offerings of the rich.

It is very beautiful to see the way the Apostle describes the gifts that the saints in Macedonia gave: (2 Cor. 8:1-5): “Moreover, brethren we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.” Remember these gifts were for the poor in Jerusalem, not to Paul himself.

Note first that it is the ‘grace of God’ that is the power that constrains the giving. Seven times in this chapter in Corinthians speaking about giving do we find the Greek word charis, ‘grace’. Then note that in God’s sight it is not the wealth of the one who gives, nor the amount of his gift, that matters. And note the joy that we have here: the very opposite of giving grudgingly or of necessity. It reminds us of 2 Cor. 9:7, “The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.” The word translated ‘cheerful’, is hilaros, from which we get the word ‘hilarious’ but it does not, of course, have any of the bad meaning that has become attached to this word in our day.

Then notice that apparently those concerned with this fund were almost unwilling to accept these gifts: not for any wrong in the givers: but I suspect because they well knew the depths of poverty from whence it came, and that they were giving ‘beyond their power’. But these dear Macedonians prayed with much entreaty that they would accept their gifts. “And this they did, not as we had hoped,” writes Paul, but in a far better way than he had ever hoped— they “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:5). Oh, that you, my dear readers, might even now (if you never have before) give your own selves to the Lord: it is the very best gift that you can ever give: He is so worthy of it, and it is holy, acceptable unto God: and it is your reasonable or, logical, service. But also you will discover— and prove when you discover— that God’s will for you is good, and acceptable to you, and perfect.

“He gives His very best to those

Who leave the choice with Him.”

But there are other sacrifices of which the Scriptures speak: or possibly the same sacrifices spoken of in other ways. In Psa. 4:5 and in Deut. 33:19, we read of ‘sacrifices of righteousness’. In Psa. 51:17, we read, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psa. 51:17). It may be that from a broken spirit the sweetest odors go up to God: and it may be that some of the sorrows of the saints that puzzle us now, have this fragrance in view. A man may have great knowledge of the Word, and great eloquence expounding it; but if he has not ‘a broken spirit’, (won, probably, from sorrows), he is likely to leave his hearers cold and untouched. Mr. Heney used to tell us that `contrite’, (of ‘a contrite spirit’) comes from the same root as the word ‘to triturate’, which means ‘to grind to fine powder’, as with a pestle and mortar. The sorrows we pass through do this for us: they make us quiet and gentle (and the Word tells us to be ‘ambitious to be quiet’; 1 Thess. 4:11; literal). We learn also from these sorrows what it means to be comforted by the

Father of Mercies, the God of all Comfort, so that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble. (2 Cor. 1:3-4). Such a sacrifice (and it is a very costly sacrifice, perhaps one of the most costly of all) our God will not despise.

But there is another kind of sacrifice yet: and this sacrifice has kept ringing through my heart from the time I began these meditations: indeed it is this sacrifice that has given the name to this book. You will find it spoken of in Psa. 27:6: “I will offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord.” Strange as it may seem, this sacrifice does not clash with the sacrifice we have just been pondering: for it is one of the lovely `contradictions’ of the Scriptures that we can be `sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing’. Yes, I think we can bring the sacrifice of a broken spirit, and sacrifices of joy, at the same time. And perhaps such are specially acceptable to God: the ‘joy and sorrow mingling’.

The gifts of the Macedonian saints in 2 Cor. 8, were ‘sacrifices of joy’. You will also remember that in Philippians 2:17 Paul had written: “Yea, and if I be poured forth upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause do ye joy and rejoice with me.” I think this looks at the Philippian saints presenting themselves as a sacrifice; and Paul himself poured forth as a drink offering on their sacrifice: as was done in the days of old in the sacrifices of Israel. And each offered the sacrifice with joy. We read in Num. 28:7, “In the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord for a drink offering.” And in Judg. 9:13, the vine asks, “Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man?” (Judg. 9:13). And in Psa. 104:15 we read: “Wine that maketh glad the heart of man” (Psa. 104:15). So we see the wine speaks of joy; and the sacrifices of Paul, and of his dear brethren in Philippi, both the sacrifice of themselves, and of what they sent to Paul in their deep poverty, all tell us of `sacrifices of joy’.

You have perhaps heard the story of the child who was keeping the best meat on his plate for his little dog. His mother asked him rather sharply, “Johnnie, why don’t you eat up your dinner?” “I’m keeping it for Fido, Mummie.” “Nonsense, eat your dinner at once, and you can collect the scraps on the plates after dinner for Fido.” The child did as he was told, and with tears running down his cheeks, he was heard to say, “Fido, dear, I wanted to give you a sacrifice, but it’s only a collection.” A sacrifice costs us something, often a collection costs next to nothing. Johnnie’s sacrifice to Fido would have been `a sacrifice of joy’. Love is the secret.

What a promise! “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (vs. 19). The very arrangement of the words is precious. Our need and His riches are strung together, looped as if by two bands. Some have sought to limit the `need’ by temporal needs: but `all your need’ certainly precludes that: and there will be no temporal needs to supply ‘in glory’. No, Beloved, take it as it stands. Endorse the promise, and accept it with joy and thanksgiving. It surely includes temporal needs: and in no mean or niggardly way: but according to His wealth, in glory, in Christ Jesus. A millionaire might give a penny to a beggar, but he would not be giving according to his wealth. Our God is the ‘Giving God’, and the Lord Jesus said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’: and He will ever have the more blessed place.

Years ago when horse-cabs were the custom in Canada, it was usual to give the cabman a tip of 25 cents. The story is told of one of Canada’s richest men who drove home one night in a cab. When he got out he handed the cabby the correct fare and a 25 cent tip. The cabby turned it over in his hand, and said, “You know, Sir, when I drive your son home, he always gives me half a dollar tip.” “Yes,” the wealthy man replied, “but he has a rich father.” The son was giving in some measure “according to his wealth.” I regret to say the father was not doing so: but our ‘rich Father’ will never treat us so: He gives “according to His wealth.” And we might bear in mind that our ‘rich Father’ has said, “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8).

But let us notice it is all our need that My God promises to supply; our need, as one has pointed out, not our greed. And I am so glad to think it does mean our spiritual needs as well as our temporal needs: needs for our soul and our spirit, for these are often greater than the needs of our bodies: need for more devotedness to Christ: need for more earnestness in finding time for prayer and the Word: need to ‘break the power of canceled sin’. And the heart that knoweth its own bitterness will know the other needs over which we so often yearn. And the promise is, “My God shall fill full every need of yours.” Whether we use every or all in this verse, both are in the singular, so we are meant to look at each individual need separately: we may spread them out before ‘my God’ one by one. And yet the word does mean all, and we may still use the lovely translation to which we are accustomed in the Authorized Version, but just remember that when God looks at your need, He sees each, single need individually: and we may do the same.

I have been linking together the ‘all’ of ‘all your need’ with the ‘all’ of ‘all your care’ in 1 Peter 5:7; and I have found them very sweet. ‘My God’ gives to me that which meets all my need; and I cast upon Him— give to Him— all my care. What an exchange! And, as Canon Baskerville points out, just as it is quite impossible to catalog all for our needs: so it is equally impossible to catalog all for our cares. The biggest, as well as the smallest, are all included in that little word all, whether it be needs or cares. Thanks be to God!

And so closes this exquisite description of the Philippians’ gift. It reminds one rather of the water from the well of Bethlehem that the three mighty men brought to David, and he poured it out before the Lord, as if it were the lives of those three men, too precious for man’s use: though I am sure the Apostle used this gift from the Philippian church: but first he presents it, as it were, to the Lord; an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.

And now, Paul, have you nothing to give in return for such a precious gift from those who love you so well? No, Paul must answer, I have nothing. A cloak, and a few books and parchments are all the possessions we ever hear Paul possessed. And yet he can say, though having nothing, yet he possesses all things: and so he can send them a promise, not of anything from himself, but from “my God.” “I have been filled full,” he had written to the Philippians, from what you sent me: now I can promise that “My God will fill full every need of yours, according to His wealth, in glory, in Christ Jesus.” He uses exactly the same word for what “my God” will do to them as he had used of what they had done for him. Canon Baskerville says that Moody once spoke of this verse as a blank check:

The firm—-“My God” This check

The promise—-“shall supply” must be

The amount—-“all your need” endorsed by

The capital—-“His riches” the person to

The bank address—-“in glory” whom it is

The signature—-“Christ Jesus” made payable.

And Canon Baskerville continues: “All your need.”

Spread it out before the Lord— needs for your body, for your soul, for yourselves, for your families, needs for the present and for the future— “all your need”— it is quite impossible to catalog all, but God promises “to fill up all your need.” Who shall do it? “My God.” That is grand! Paul says, “See how ‘my God’ has supplied me — my God shall supply you”. The same God is our God. Think of that. His arm is not waxed short, neither His heart grown hard towards any of His children (Isa. 50:2; 59:1).

“Now unto our God and Father (be all the glory3 unto the ages of ages. Amen” (4:20).

Real true worship is the overflow of the heart to God: and this is exactly what we see in this lovely little verse. That overflow of heart cannot be taught, and cannot be learned: it is spontaneous: it bursts forth from a full heart, just as we see here. There are many such bursts of praise in the Scriptures4 and they are all different: they are not planned, they are not of men, but come from the Holy Spirit within us. What can we say to such a promise as the one we have just been considering? What could a penniless beggar say to a royal giver who freely gave him a blank check, good for an unlimited amount: a check that only needs endorsement— only needs to be appropriated— only needs to be taken as my own: and I have untold riches: what can I say to such an offer, when that offer is made by the Lord God Almighty, my Father? In Revelation, chapter 5, who dares to say where the burst of praise begins, and where it ends? “The elders fell down and worshipped!” is the last we see in that glorious scene (See New Translation); and shall we not say— as we fall down and worship—

“NOW UNTO OUR GOD AND FATHER BE ALL THE GLORY UNTO THE AGES OF THE AGES.5 AMEN.”

Now to our God and Father

May all the glory be:

To ages of the ages,

Through all eternity.

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 43: The Final Greetings

“Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.”

“The grace of-the Lord Jesus Christ (be) with your spirit”

Philippians 4:21-23

In verse 19 we read of “every need.” That took account of every single individual need by itself. Each need was looked at and considered separately. And “my God” would fill full each one. In the verse before us now Paul sends greeting to “every saint,” individual greetings to each one. Perhaps many of those saints had been won to Christ by Paul: he probably knew each one intimately, and loved each one individually, and that individual greeting would mean much to them. There was a meeting I knew well, nearly every individual in it had been won by a dear old brother who was nearing Home. One day he said to me, “I love to stop singing sometimes in the meetings, and just close my eyes, and sit and listen; and I can pick out each individual voice, and I know each one of them so well.” I think the word, “Greet every saint” has in it something of the same thought.

But each saint is not only in Philippi, but “in Christ Jesus” (vs. 7). We got the same thought in the first verse of our Epistle: “To all the saints in Christ Jesus being in Philippi.” And now at the close of the letter he again reminds them that they are in Christ Jesus. Some think this verse should be translated, “Greet in Christ Jesus every saint.” I suppose that would correspond to one of our own letters today, where we close, “With love in Christ Jesus to each saint.” In either case, we are reminded that we are one “in Christ.” But the whole Epistle has been full of this precious thought, that we are in Christ:

“I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ” (ch. 1:8).;

“My bonds in Christ are manifest” (ch. 1:13);

“Your rejoicing may be more abundant in Christ Jesus for me” (1:26);

“Consolation in Christ” (ch. 2:1).;

“I trust in the Lord Jesus” (ch. 2:19).;

“I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come” (ch. 2:24);

“Receive him therefore in the Lord” (ch. 2:29).;

“Rejoice in the Lord” (vs. 4) (ch. 3:1).;

“Rejoice in Christ Jesus” (ch. 3:3).;

“The high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (ch. 3:14);

“Stand fast in the Lord” (vs. 1).;

“Be of the same mind in the Lord” (vs. 2);

“Rejoice in the Lord alway” (vs. 4).;

“I rejoice in the Lord greatly” (vs. 10);

“I have strength for all things in the One that gives me power” (4:13, New Translation);

“His wealth in glory, in Christ Jesus” (4:19);

“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus” (4:21).

“Let us never forget, then, that we are in Christ: and also let us remember Christ in us, the hope of glory”. (Col. 1:27).

“The brothers that are with me greet you” (Phil. 4:21). It would seem that these brothers refer to Paul’s special companions, who were present with him for various reasons, not residents of Rome. Bishop Lightfoot gives a most interesting collection of these honored names, which I hope you may enjoy as I have done: he says: “Of occasional visitors in Rome, his converts or his colleagues in the gospel, the companions of his travels and the delegates of foreign churches, not a few are named. His youthful disciple and associate Timotheus, the best beloved of his spiritual sons, seems to have been with him during the whole or nearly the whole of his captivity.1 Another friend also, who had shared with him the perils of the voyage, Luke, the ‘beloved physician,’ now his fellow-laborer and perhaps his medical attendant, hereafter his biographer, is constantly by his side.2 His two favorite Macedonian churches are well represented among his companions: Philippi dispatches Epaphroditus with pecuniary(?) aid, welcome to him as a relief of his want but doubly welcome as a token of their devoted love3: Aristarchus is present from Thessalonica4, a tried associate, who some years before had imperiled his life with St. Paul at Ephesus5 and now shared his captivity at Rome6. Delegates from the Asiatic churches too were with him: Tychicus7, a native of the Roman province of Asia and probably of Ephesus its capital8, the Apostle’s companion both in earlier and later days9: and Epaphras the evangelist of his native Colossae, who came to consult Paul on the dangerous heresies then threatening this and the neighboring churches over which he watched with intense anxiety10. Besides these were other friends old and new: one pair especially, whose names are linked together by contrast; John Mark, who, having deserted in former years, has now returned to his post and is once more a loyal soldier of Christ11; and Demas, as yet faithful to his allegiance, who hereafter will turn renegade and desert the Apostle in his sorest need12.

To these must be added a disciple of the circumcision, whose surname ‘the just’ proclaims his devotion to his former faith— one Jesus, to us a name only, but to St. Paul much more than a name, for amidst the general defection of the Jewish converts he stood by the Apostle almost alone13. Lastly, there was Philemon’s runaway slave Onesimus, ‘not now a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved,’ whose career is the most touching episode in the apostolic history and the noblest monument of the moral power of the gospel”14.

It is not of course suggested that all these persons were with Paul at one and the same time; but it does seem that all these visited him during the time of his imprisonment in Rome, and some were with him for a long time: so it is possible Luke was one of those referred to in Philippians 4:21. It seems probable that Luke had stayed in Philippi for a considerable time: possibly it was his home: so he would be well known to the saints there, and they would specially value his greeting. Who the others were, if any, with him at this time, we cannot say; but possibly several more.

“All the saints greet you, but most of all the ones from the household of Caesar” (4:22).

At the beginning of the Epistle to the Philippians we read: “To all the saints in Christ Jesus being in Philippi” (1:1). Now at the close of the Epistle we find the very same words: “All the saints greet you.” That was all the saints in Rome. It makes one think of the greeting the Apostle sent to the saints in Rome: “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, saints by calling” (Rom. 1:7). No smaller circle than “all the saints,” whether in Philippi or in Rome will satisfy the Apostle, or be pleasing to the heart of God. And the same is true today, whether it be London or New York; Bombay or Hong Kong; Melbourne or Shanghai: God looks at “all the saints.” Yesterday I read a message to “all in our fellowship.” That is not God’s way. God does not send His message to all the Anglicans or Baptists or Plymouth Brethren. Men make parties: but God’s heart always takes in “all the saints.”

And please do not for a moment suppose that “all the saints” means all the specially holy people, like “Saint Paul” or “Saint Peter,” as man— not God— calls them, or any other good men. No. You are just as truly a saint as Paul or Peter, if you are washed in the precious blood of Christ as they were. And do not think that you are “called to be a saint” as our ordinary English Bible puts it in Rom. 1:7. Paul was a tentmaker by calling: he did not have to try to be a tentmaker, as the words “called to be a tentmaker” might suggest. Just so, we are saints: not “called to be saints” (1 Cor. 1:2). Paul was a tentmaker by calling, and also a saint by calling, and an apostle by calling. He was not trying to be a tentmaker or a saint or an apostle. He was each of these by his calling. Just so, you are a saint by calling, if you are saved, redeemed with that precious blood.

And what is a saint? A saint is a holy person, a person set apart. You may say, I often do not act like a saint, so I don’t think I can be one. But if you belong to Christ, you are a saint: a saint by calling. I might be a farmer by calling, but I might be lazy and fond of pleasure, and let my farm get in bad shape. Still I am a farmer by calling, even though I may be a very poor one.

Though all the saints sent greetings, yet there was a special group marked out as sending special greetings: and a group that is apt to surprise us very much. It is not a group held together by special views of baptism or church government, but rather linked together by their secular calling: and strange to say it was a group that might include slaves or nobles.

“All the saints greet you, but most of all, (or, chiefly, or especially), the ones from the household of Caesar” (4:22).

Bishop Lightfoot brings forward much proof to show that “the household of Caesar” (vs. 22) included a vast number of persons, either actual or former slaves, and freeman, who filled every sort of office from the most menial to the highest: something like the British “Civil Service.” All were “persons in the Emperor’s service, whether slaves or freemen, in Italy and even in the provinces.” Bishop Moule says: “The literature of sepulchral inscriptions at Rome is peculiarly rich in allusions to ‘the Household.’ And it is from this quarter, particularly from discoveries in it made early in the last century, that Lightfoot gets good reasons for thinking that in Philippians 4:22 we may, quite possibly, be reading a greeting from Rome sent by the very persons (speaking roundly) who are greeted in the Epistle to Rome (chapter 16). A place of burial on the

Appian Way, devoted to the ashes of Imperial freemen and slaves, and other similar receptacles, all to be dated with practical certainty about the middle period of the first century, yield the following names: Amplias, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, Tryphoena, Tryphosa, Rufus, Hermes, Hermas, Philologus, Julius, Nereis; a name which might have denoted the sister (see Rom. 16:15) of a man Nereus" (The Epistle to the Romans, by H.C.G. Moule: Pg. 424, Hodder & Stoughton edition). All the above names are found in Rom. 16, except the last.

Prof. Blaiklock in his delightful little book, Out of the Earth: the Witness of Archeology to the New Testament, Paternoster Press, shows that by the end of the first century Christianity had gained a place in the highest circles of Rome: Flavius Clemens, a cousin of the Emperor, was put to death, and his wife Domitilla, a niece of the Emperor, was banished, for confessing Christ. Next to the Emperor these two held the highest rank in the Empire.

You will recall that Philippi was 'a Colony', and so may have had various officials from Rome; also it was settled in part by disbanded soldiers from the Roman army; so it is quite possible that with all these, there were some who were personally acquainted with some of the saints in Caesar's household in Rome.

But let us never forget that all the saints in Rome sent greetings to all the saints in Philippi: and not the slightest distinction is made between a slave and one highborn. All are 'one in Christ Jesus': 'one spirit, one soul, one body, one loaf, one new man, one flock': just as there is 'one Spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all.'

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (4:23).

Our beloved Authorized Version has, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all," (vs. 23) but the correct reading is almost certainly as shown: "with your spirit" (Gal. 6:18). And why, when writing to "all the saints" does the apostle not say, "be with your spirits"?

Why should spirit be singular, instead of plural? I think the answer is that they were one body, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). One body has but one spirit. And therefore the Apostle, by the Spirit of God, uses spirit, not spirits. But there is more: in chapter 1:27, we read: "Only worthily of the gospel of Christ live as citizens, in order that whether coming and seeing you, whether being absent, I am hearing the things concerning you, that you are standing firm in one spirit with one soul, together contending for the faith of the gospel." By doctrine they were one body: they were made one body by the one Spirit, the Holy Spirit, dwelling in them: so had only one spirit: but in practice also, they had but one spirit; or, rather, the Apostle exhorts them that he might hear this of them: for as a matter of fact, there were two sisters amongst them who had not one spirit. Perhaps these last two words of the Epistle are a final message from the heart of the Apostle to these two sisters, a message to be understood fully by them alone. Perhaps it is a message that some of us need at the present time.

In the second verse of our Epistle, Paul had written: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 1:7): and now at the close he writes: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (Gal. 6:18). He begins with grace, and he ends with grace. They owed all to grace, and so do we. Yet, sad to say, naturally our hearts turn from grace to law. We think law can make us what we ought to be: we think making rules can heal these sad quarrels and make us holy, with one spirit: but we are wrong. The Spirit never calls the Galatians (who loved law) 'holy' or 'saints'. The Apostle, directed by the Spirit of God, is right. What we need is to know more the power of Grace. "The power of unity is grace; and, as man is a sinner and departed from God, the power of gathering is grace— grace manifested in Jesus on the cross, and bringing us to God in heaven, and bringing us in Him who is gone there. This is holiness." ("Grace the Power of Gathering" J.N.D.).

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Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 37: Heavenly Citizens

"Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. [For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, (that they are) the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.] For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: 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."

"Be joint-imitators of me, brothers, and fix-your-eyes-on the-(ones) thus walking as you have us for a pattern; for many are-walking, [of-whom I many-times told you, but now even weeping tell (you)], (as) the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end (is) destruction, whose god (is) the belly, and the glory in their shame, the-ones minding earthly-(things). For our citizen-life (or, citizenship) exists-already in (the) heavens, from whence also we-are-eagerly-awaiting (as) Savior, (the) Lord Jesus Christ, who shall-transform (or, change-the-fashion-of) our body of humiliation, into-conformity to His body of glory, according-to the working of-His ability even to subdue all-(things) to Him."

Philippians 3:17-21

We saw in our last chapter, that Paul exhorted the saints: "Only unto what we have succeeded in reaching, (let us) walk in the same steps." We saw the word for walk in this passage means to walk in a line, as a line of soldiers, each keeping step with the other. In Gal. 5:25 we find the same word, and there the Word tells us: "By the Spirit we should keep in step." If each man exactly copies the man ahead of him, then all will be in step. And, remember, the Spirit dwells in each true believer: and so can keep us in step, if we will but heed Him. This is just what the Apostle is telling us now:

"Be joint-imitators of me, brothers."

I do not think 'imitator' is a good word here. The Greek word is the one from which we get 'mimics', and this would be excellent, if it did not have a nasty meaning attached to it. Even 'copyist' has not an entirely good meaning, but it does give the thought fairly well.

I think what Paul is telling the Philippians (and us) is that we each one should copy him: and in 1 Cor. 11:1, he writes: "Be ye followers" (it is the same word as here): "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ". That is the secret. Paul follows Christ: copies Him, 'mimics' Him,

if we can say it reverently: and we all are to be joint-imitators' of Paul. This is the only place in the New Testament we find this word, 'joint-imitator', and it includes all the saints. It tells us we are not only to "keep step," but we are also to "keep rank," like the men of Zebulon, long ago: fifty thousand of them could keep rank, (1 Chron. 12:33), so that should encourage the little companies of the saints to do the same. You remember Peter told us that Christ left us an example "that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). That is exactly what the Apostle Paul was doing; and he calls us to be joint-imitators' of him, in this path. In this way we will keep step and keep rank.

More eyes may be watching our steps than we realize: what a responsibility that we do not lead their feet astray! What a responsibility to see that we are faithful followers— imitators— of Christ, following His steps. You will recall that in verses 12 and 14 Paul spoke about pressing on. The word is dioko, and means also to press after. In the New Testament we often find it: there are many things we are to press after. Four times it tells us to press after peace; three times after love; twice after faith, and twice after righteousness; once each after godliness, patience, meekness, holiness, hospitality, and that which is good: besides those already mentioned in Philippians 3. But there is a stronger word than dioko, "I-press-after": it is kata-dioko, meaning "I-earnestly-press-after." It is used only once in the New Testament, and that is in Mark 1:36, where the disciples woke up to find their Lord had risen up great while before day, and had departed into a solitary place to pray: "and Simon and they that were with him earnestly-pressed-after Him." As far as I know we are never told to `press-after' Christ: but we are given this beautiful example of His disciples of old who earnestly-pressed-after Him: and if we truly love Him, will not we be joint-imitators of them? Meanwhile, let us give heed to be `joint-imitators' of Paul, as he exhorts us in verse 17.

Again we get that sweet word 'brothers', again telling of the earnestness and importance of the Apostle's appeal. This word really belongs to the portion we have just been considering: "Be-joint-imitators of me, brothers." It might have seemed as though Paul was setting himself above the saints in Philippi, so he quickly reminds them that he and they are all brothers: all one family.

Now he continues: "And fix-your-eyes-on the-ones walking as you-have us for-a-pattern." "Fix-your-eyes-on" (vs. 17) is the same word we found in chapter 2:4, where he told them not to fix their eyes each on his own interests, but each on the interests of others also. So there are some things on which we should fix our eyes, and some things on which we should not fix them. The word translated 'goal' in the 14th verse of our chapter is from the same word; as the goal is the spot on which the racer has his eye fixed. Now the Apostle tells the saints to have their eyes on the ones thus walking as you have us for a pattern, or model. Paul had said, "Be joint-imitators of me," now he speaks of us, perhaps this includes Timothy, Luke, Epaphroditus: all well known to the saints in Philippi. Notice Paul does not tell them to have their eyes on "us." The ones they were to fix their eyes on were saints in the assembly at Philippi who were walking as they had these dear servants of the Lord for a pattern. How good to know there were saints in Philippi whom Paul could commend in this lovely way. And I doubt not Christ has His own faithful ones in many places today: perhaps poor and despised: as Christ Himself was down here: perhaps not recognized even by their brethren: but these are the ones on whom we are to fix our eyes.

"For many are-walking, (of whom I many-times told you, but now even weeping tell you) as the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, and the glory in their shame, the-ones minding earthly-things."

The reason they were to fix their eyes on the saints having Paul and his friends for a pattern was that there were many who were walking very differently. The word used for walk here and in verse 17 indicates walking alone, and there is no thought of following in line. In the early verses of this chapter we saw that the enemy was seeking to bring in those who taught circumcision and the law of Moses, as the means of salvation. Now we come to those who go to the other extreme. The 'narrow road' has two sides, and often in our eagerness to avoid one side, we may fall into the ditch on the other side. These men were 'enemies of the cross of Christ'. It does not say they were enemies of Christ, but to take up the cross and follow Christ was the last thing they desired. But there is no other way of safety except by the cross; so 'their end is destruction'. This word is the key note of 2 Peter 2: false teachers who bring upon themselves swift destruction. Their god was their stomach: their stomachs had first place in their lives. Are there not such today? And they had their minds on things of earth. These people evidently had come in among the Christians, and there may have been no gross evil, as men see it, in their lives, that would call for excommunication. Their daily walk may have been better than some who were true believers: for it was a day in which all sought their own. They may have attended the meetings regularly, and even taken the Lord's Supper: yet, their end was destruction.

There is no ground, as far as I know, to suppose that any of these people were living in Philippi; rather the reverse, as apparently the saints there did not know of them, apart from what Paul had told them when he was with them, and again in this Epistle. But the true saints needed to be warned against them. Their conduct made Paul weep, as he wrote of them. Like Joseph, Paul was a "great weeper." The first epistle to Corinthians was written with "many tears." He often wept as he brought the gospel to the Eph. 1 am sure the epistle to the Galatians was blotted with untold tears. And now he weeps even as he writes to his beloved brethren in Philippi. (2 Cor. 2:4; Acts 20:31).

Actually we know that in the days of the early Church those known as Gnostics were in some cases `practical libertines', walking very much as the Apostle describes here. Others, it is true, were ascetics, but many made a god of their bellies.

My reader is probably thinking, "This has nothing to do with me: why spend time thinking of such persons?" The Spirit of God is the One Who has given us this grave warning; and I believe that many of us in our day might do well to lay to heart His words. Never, I suppose, has there been such luxury and extravagance amongst the Lord's own people, as there is today in some quarters. It is doubtless a mark of this present evil age: but the tragedy is that the saints of God, who should be marked by holiness— separation from such things— have, on the contrary, become seriously affected by them. I know that the very 'atmosphere' which we breathe today is saturated with this spirit of luxury; but there were fish— should I not say, there are fish?— that have both fins and scales. (Lev. 11:9). Such fish can swim against the current, and can pass through filth without it's affecting them. But, let me repeat it, I believe most of us do well to take earnest heed to this most solemn warning, as well as to the warning of the aged Apostle John: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21). How sad if the idol is my stomach!

There are quite a few words in the Greek New Testament with the thought of luxury in them: streniao (Rev. 18:7, 9) tells of 'insolent luxury': luxuriated is the way the new Interlinear Greek Testament translates it. Truphao (James 5:5) tells of 'the effeminacy of luxury': lived daintily. Spatalao (1 Tim. 5:6; James 5:5) tells of `the wastefulness of luxury': lived riotously. Aselgeia is 'the wantonness of luxury' (translated `luxury' by Ronald Knox in Gal. 5:19: one of the works of the flesh). We find it four times in Peter's epistles. The New Testament utterly condemns all this sort of thing. There we often read of 'prayer and fasting': what do we know of it today?

You recall that Martha was cumbered about much serving. The Master was coming for a meal, and Martha wanted a meal that would be worthy of Him. What does the Lord say? “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many: but few are needful, or one.” That is the literal translation of what the Lord said. Our translators have added ‘things’ so as to make good English: but probably what the Lord meant was, ‘many dishes’, or, ‘many courses’, when few dishes’, or ‘even one dish’, only a plate of porridge perhaps, was all that was needed. Should not this have a voice for us today? See also Rom. 16:17,18.

The Apostle ends the description of these people with the words: “whose glory is in their shame; the ones minding earthly things.” Beloved saints, do not, in many cases, our homes, our furnishings, our cars, our manner of life agree to an appalling extent with this description? And perhaps the saddest part is that we glory in them, when they are in reality our shame. Were we more truly joint-imitators’ of the Apostle, we too would weep.

Verses 18 and 19, which give us this sad description of some in Paul’s day, are a sort of parenthesis; and now we come to verse 20, which seems to follow on directly from verse 17: “Fix your eyes on the ones thus walking as you have us for a pattern.... For our citizen-life1 is already in the heavens; from whence we are eagerly awaiting as Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” The word our at the beginning of this 20th verse is very emphatic. `Our citizen-life’ in the heavens is contrasted with those who ‘mind earthly things’. They are the ones ‘that dwell upon the earth’, of Rev. 3:10; 6:10, etc. This Greek expression is used, I believe, 11 times in Revelation. May the Lord help us to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. May He give us to “set our mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1, 2).

The saints at Philippi would probably understand Paul’s meaning better, and more easily, than we can: for you will remember that Philippi was ‘a colony’ of Rome. (Acts 16:12). The word ‘colony’ did not have at all the same meaning that we think of today. Rather it was a miniature or copy of Rome, transplanted into the province of Macedonia. It was populated largely by men who had formerly been Roman soldiers, and they were all Roman citizens, with the special privileges that belonged to such. You will remember that Paul was a Roman citizen, ‘free born’. We have already spoken of these things, and pointed out the pride with which they held this citizenship. Paul uses this unique position of the city of Philippi as a figure of the heavenly citizenship of the Philippian saints. And they would understand his meaning better than any other of the saints to whom he wrote.

Not only was their citizenship in Rome, but their laws, their government, their ways, their ‘conversation’, were all Roman: even though they lived in Macedonia. And so is it with us. Our ‘citizen-life’ is (not, ought to be) in heaven. We are:

“From whence also we eagerly await (as) Savior, (the) Lord Jesus Christ.”

When first we learned to know the Lord Jesus Christ, we learned to know Him ‘as Savior’. What, then, does it mean when it says that now ‘we eagerly await Him as Savior’? When first we learned to know Him, we knew Him as Savior of our souls— the Savior Who bore our sins: now we eagerly await Him as Savior of our bodies: “Ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly-awaiting the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). It is the very same word we have in Philippians 3:20: `eagerly-await’, or, `assiduously and patiently wait for’ (Thayer), and he suggests that we compare the English expression to ‘wait it out’: which, I suppose, means that we go on eagerly awaiting, no matter how long it may be: right on till Him we await appears. This word is used three times in Rom. 8 verses 19, 23, and 25. It is used 8 times in the New Testament, always with a good sense. You will recall the number eight is the resurrection number: just the opposite of dwelling on the earth, or minding earthly things.

There is another rather sweet thing in this verse. Our citizen-life, or citizenship, is in the heavens; the word heavens, is plural, perhaps intimating the vastness of that sphere: but when we read, “from whence also we eagerly await as Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”— the word whence is in the singular, as though it might suggest the Father’s home: not the vast heavens.

Beloved, are we eagerly awaiting as Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ? A dearly loved brother, speaking nearly forty years ago, remarked: “We remember the day when there first dawned on our souls the truth of a coming Savior: it was then so real that every night we prayed that, before we awoke, we might see Him as He is; and in the morning we thought of one thing— that before the evening came, the day of glory might arise for our souls” (F. Lavington). Is the hope as bright and real and true for us?

“Who shall transform (or, change the fashion of) our body of humiliation, into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of His ability even to subdue all things to Him” (Phil. 3:21).

The Greek word translated ‘transform’ in this verse means to change the outward appearance of that which itself remains the same. It is used of Saul and of Jeroboam’s wife, when they disguised themselves.

(1 Sam. 28:8; 1 Kings 14:2). Their outward appearance was changed, but they remained the same. ‘The butterfly, prophetic type of man’s resurrection, is immeasurably more beautiful than the grub, yet has been unfolded from it’. (Trench). The outward form of the grub has been changed: it has been ‘unclothed’

(2 Cor. 5:4) from its grub-body; and it has ‘put on’ (1 Cor. 15:53-54) its beautiful garments; but it is still the very same creature, the same life, that was in the grub. Our Lord was “found in fashion as a man” (ch. 2:8). This word ‘fashion’ is the word from which the expression ‘change-the-fashion’ is made. When men saw Him, saw His outward appearance, “there was no beauty that we should desire Him.” To man’s eye, He was only ‘the carpenter’. (Mark 6:3). It tells of the outward form only, but not of the inner Being. In His inner Being, He was ‘in the form of God’. This is an entirely different word, telling of the ‘specific character, the inward and essential’. Men found Him only ‘the carpenter’, for they judged by outward appearances: but all the time He was very God.

So the Apostle writes: “Who shall transform (or, change the fashion of) our body of humiliation, into conformity to (or, sharing the form of) His body of glory.” The word translated conformity uses the very same word that was used when the Scripture tells us He was ‘in the form of God’. It is the ‘specific character, the inward and essential’.

Our outward form is changed, truly: but we are still our own selves. Our dear ones who have gone before us to the Father’s House are still themselves, still our own dear ones: their body of humiliation is `transformed’: my beloved wife will be no longer deaf: but she will be her very own self, when I see her again. These poor, weak, mortal bodies are going to be changed ‘into conformity to’, or, are going ‘to share the form

of', 'His body of glory'. We may not be able to understand it: but we believe it: and if we ask "How?" the answer is, "according to the working of His ability even to subdue all things to Him." But let us be careful not to ask too many questions as to "How are the dead raised up?". and "With what body do they come?" or the Lord will answer us, "Thou fool," as He did in 1 Cor, 15:35-36. But this we do know: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). This is the very same word as the Apostle uses in Philippians 3:21: the only other place in the New Testament where we find it.

And Who changes us in this amazing way? Our Lord Jesus Christ, Whom we eagerly await as Savior. He Who "made the stars also," (Gen. 1:16) can subdue these mortal bodies, and have them 'put on immortality'. Now, little by little, as we gaze at our beloved Lord in glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory: then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face.

We may not pass over the last words of this amazing Scripture: "According to the working of His ability even to subdue all things to Him." In Mic. 7:10 we read: "He shall subdue our iniquities."2 And the day is coming when this will be true in all its fullness, even though now we need to pray that He may 'break the power of canceled sin'. But even now He is able to help us to bring 'into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ'. (2 Cor. 10:5). 'He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet'. (1 Cor. 15:25-27).

And though 'now we see not yet all things put under Him', yet let us remember the fight has been fought and won: the foes that are left are vanquished foes. When on the cross our Lord cried

"Tetelestai!"—"It is Finished!"

He knew then that the mighty victory was won. It is finished! The fight was over: even death must yield its prey.

When a conquering Roman general returned to Rome, he would lead a march of triumph through the city: and would shout:

"Tetelestai!"— "It is Finished!"

and the crowds would answer in triumph:

"Tetelestai!"

It was the cry of the Conqueror: and this is just what the last words of chapter 3 of Philippians tell us.

"Tetelestai!" "It is finished!"

"Tetelestai!" All is done!

"Tetelestai!" Cries the Conqueror!

Conflict's finished! Victory won!

"Tetelestai!" Tetelestai!"

All His foes have been put down!

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 36: How Minded?

"Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."

"As-many therefore as (are) perfect, let-us-be thus minded. And if in-anything ye-are differently minded, this also God shall-reveal to-you. Only unto what we-have-(succeeded)-in-reaching, (let us) walk in-the-same steps."

Philippians 3:15-16

In verse 12 the Apostle told us he was "not already perfected" (vs. 12). It may seem strange that now he speaks of "as many as are perfect" (vs. 15). There is really no contradiction at all. In verse 12, the Apostle was looking forward to the end of the race, when he would be with Christ in glory, and his "vile body" would be changed, that it might be "like unto His glorious body" (vs. 21). Then he will be "perfected," but not until then. But in the verse before us, he is looking at us down here. He has been giving a most thrilling description of the Christian race: and in this verse he may be thinking of a runner who has trained well, and is, as we say, "in perfect condition."

In the dining room in our school there were five long tables, with about 30 boys at each table. One of these was called "the training table," and any boy who seriously wish to train for a race, or other sports, sat at this table. The food here was plain, no pies or fancy puddings, as at the other tables: but the boys at the training table knew they must deny themselves— and they did so gladly— for the sake of the prize they hoped to gain. As you looked at some of these boys, with their daily training and self-denial, you could not but say, of some at least, "They are a type of perfect boyhood." When he speaks of those who are 'perfect', I think the Apostle is thinking of those who seek to run the spiritual race with all their hearts, as these boys sought to run their school races. Please read 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

The word perfect is also used in another way in the Scriptures, as in Heb. 5:14: "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age." Here "full age," or maturity, refers to spiritual maturity. The words "them that are of full age" (Heb. 5:14) are literally: "the ones being perfect": that is, spiritually mature. And it may be that this is the thought in the Apostle's mind: or, perhaps, he had both in mind: one full grown, spiritually; in perfect training. And to all such the Apostle says: "Let us be thus minded" (vs. 15). Let us have the same mind towards the race that Paul has just described so vividly: "Let everything go that would interfere with your running; do not hesitate; let the eye be single. Saints

in this condition, with Christ as their one object, the Word of God as their one guide, will not be long in seeing eye to eye." (Lincoln).

We have already seen that the Apostle had grave cause for fearing that some of the saints in Philippi did not see eye to eye, and in the fourth chapter of our Epistle, he must speak of this still more plainly: but now he is pointing out the remedy. We have also noticed before how often the Apostle speaks of how we are "minded." I think ten times in this Epistle does he speak of this: and ten, you will remember, speaks of responsibility. We are responsible for the way our minds work: and this is a serious matter, for "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). And you will recall in the second chapter of our Epistle the Spirit of God tells us: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (ch. 2:5). O Beloved, if only we would obey this single injunction, we would all be of one mind: our strife and our quarrels would all disappear. You remember Christ said, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). That tells us the mind of Christ.

Another has said— "Meekness never takes offense, and lowliness never gives offense." It is: "Only by pride cometh contention" (Prov. 13:10). Notice the big "I" in the center of that word. That is the one who causes the trouble. So the Apostle after saying: "Let us be thus minded," (vs. 15) continues: "And if in anything ye are differently minded, this also God shall reveal to you." I think differently minded, means that some are not of the mind just described, the mind the Apostle had in running the race. I do not think the Apostle is thinking of evil and blasphemous teaching that would mean disloyalty to Christ if we had to do with it. But there are many matters in which we may go on together in happy fellowship, even though we may not be entirely agreed. And the remedy is very sweet: leave them with the Lord, and God Himself shall reveal this to us. It might be well for us to lay this to heart, for sometimes we are tempted to take it on ourselves to try and compel our brethren to have our mind: and we seem sometimes to forget that I do not know everything, and it is possible I might make mistakes myself. And even if I could succeed in forcing my brother to accept my ideas; have I gained anything, unless the Spirit of God teaches him? And it may be the Spirit of God has something to reveal to me also. In 1 Thess. 4:9 we read: "Ye yourselves are taught of God." But let us remember that it is: "The meek will He teach His way" (Psa. 25:9). May He give us that spirit that is willing to learn of Him!

And notice that we do not learn these truths of God by study. 'All spiritual realities have a veil over them to our sight till God lifts it up to disclose first one portion and then another of the whole thing'. The word translated 'shall reveal', is literally, 'shall unveil'. God lifts the veil that hangs over these spiritual things, so that we can see them as they truly are. I think it is this veil that keeps even dear children of God from being able to see truths that God has, perhaps, unveiled to us: and we cannot understand why our brethren do not see them too. "Things which eye has not seen.... God has revealed (unveiled) to us by His Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:9 N.T.). 'And this, which is spoken of as an accomplished act in general, is a gradual and progressive act for the individual'. So we need patience one with another.

"Only unto what we have succeeded in reaching,1 (let us) walk in the same steps."

We have been speaking about running, now we are to speak about walking, and in the last chapter of our Epistle we must speak about standing.

The word translated reaching, seems always to indicate not merely reaching, but reaching with some difficulty (Moule), so the word succeeded attempts to express this. But if we have succeeded in any measure in reaching that mind that seeks those things above, that has Christ alone for its object, that is ready to deny ourselves, to sit (so to speak) at the training table, to keep up our daily exercise, forgetting the things behind, and straining onward to the things before, not tempted with an ice cream or cake (that which they represent in spiritual things), let us hold this fast. And remember that to him that bath shall more be given.

And there is another thing you will find, and that is there is a strong bond between those who have this mind; those who sit at the training table, and train in real dead earnest, are drawn very close together. Another has said: "Devotedness to Jesus is the strongest bond between human hearts."

Peter tells us that Christ has left us an example (a copy, as we say, to write after) "that ye should follow in His steps" (1 Peter 2:21). And if we are all following in His steps, we will all be of one mind. In Eph. 4 we learn more about our walk: "I therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation (or, calling) wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 35: The Race

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

"Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected; but I-press-on, if also I-may-appropriate, seeing that (or, with-a-view to-which) also I-have-been-appropriated by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not-yet reckon myself to-have-appropriated; but one-(thing)— on-the-one-hand forgetting the-(thing) behind, on-the-other-hand straining-forward to-the-(things) before— down to-the-goal I-press unto the prize of-the calling on-high of God in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 3:12-14

In chapter 33 we saw that Paul suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but refuse or dung, in order that he might gain Christ: and in chapter 34 we saw seven other treasures that he might obtain with Christ. Now he says: "Not that I have already obtained" (vs. 12). He does not say what it is he has not yet obtained: he is running a race, and has neither time nor breath for a word he can do without. Notice the urgency all through this passage of Scripture: the sentences are short, and sometimes seem unfinished, as the Apostle strains to press on. His eye is not on us, his readers, but on Christ, at the end of the race. Oh, that we knew more of such urgency!

And so, were you to ask Paul, "What is it you have not yet obtained?" I think he would reply, "Have you so quickly forgotten my passionate longing to gain Christ, and with Him those other treasures I showed you? I have not got them yet: but I am pressing on for them."

When I first went to a large boys' school, it was Easter time, and in a few weeks they were going to hold the annual school races and other athletic sports. The various events were listed, and the boys invited to enter their names for the races in which they wished to take part. The prizes were also put on view: they fairly took away my breath: never had I seen such a collection of beautiful silver cups and trophies. I was only just twelve, and most of the boys were older, so I knew I had not much chance: but there was one little silver cup for the hundred yard dash, for boys of twelve and under: and, oh, how I longed for that cup! I had not already obtained it, but I could train and practice for that race, and then, so run that I might obtain! And I often went and looked at the little cup, and that stirred me to more earnest efforts.

I think that is something the way the dear Apostle felt, as he gazed on Christ, and all the treasures found in Him. But then Paul was still running the race, and the prize does not come until the race is finished: so I think that is what he means when he says: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected; but I press on, or— I am pressing on!"

There is a difference between the race Paul was running, and the races we ran at school that day: in our races but one received the prize; but in Paul's race (and he won the prize, not a silver cup, but a crown of righteousness), the prize was, "not to me only," he says, "but unto all them that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

And what did he mean when he said, I am not "already perfected" (vs. 12)? He did not mean that he expected down here to be perfect, and without sin. Rather, I think, he meant that he had not yet that glorified body that he would have later on, (see verse 21), through "the power of His resurrection," (vs. 10) the last of those treasures on which he had been gazing. We have seen that salvation in Philippians not only includes the salvation of our souls, but also being kept all the way through this wilderness journey, and right on till we reach that home in glory: not till then have we fully obtained, or are we perfected.

And so he says, "But I am pressing on." Like the runner in the 12th of Hebrews, he would lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and he would run with endurance the race set before him. And it was not any hundred yard dash that Paul was running. The race he ran called for endurance: never to give up: he may have been like some of a previous day, "faint yet pursuing" (Judg. 8:4): so he cries, "But I press on!"

"But I press on, if also I may appropriate, seeing that also I have been appropriated by Christ Jesus."

The word we have translated "appropriate" is sometimes translated "apprehend", sometimes, "lay hold on" or "grasp", sometimes "get possession of". The meaning is very much the same with any of these words, and each carries much truth in it: but there is such a fullness in many Greek words that one English word cannot express it; so in using appropriate there is no suggestion that these other words are not right: but it is with the hope of bringing out another ray of divine light from this word that Paul uses. One of the best Greek Lexicons (Moulton and Milligan), that has compared many New Testament words with the recent finds of old Greek manuscripts, tells us that appropriate "is Paul's regular use of the verb in active and passive": so we have used it. It just means, to take for oneself and this is exactly what Paul had done: he had taken Christ for Himself, for his own gain: and for Him he had thrown away all other gains, seeing that Christ Jesus had appropriated him: taken him for Himself. "I am His, and He is mine."

I suppose some of my readers will say that `appropriate' must have an object to it: he must tell what it is he so longs to appropriate: but I do not think Paul troubles about small matters like that: he is so earnestly pressing on in his race, and his eyes and heart are so filled with Christ, and the treasures he has been showing us in Christ: treasures he longs to appropriate, that it never crosses his mind that our eyes and hearts may not be filled with the same Object, and so we might not realize that he wants to appropriate Christ and the treasures to be found with Him.

And why does he so passionately long to appropriate Christ? He gives his reason: "Seeing that also I have been appropriated by Christ Jesus." I think that is perfectly beautiful. Long years before on the Damascus road the Lord Jesus Christ had `appropriated' Paul: Paul had seen Him in His glory, and from that day and onward his one absorbing desire was to appropriate Him. But, you say, had not Paul long since appropriated Christ? Did he not, only a few verses back, say "Christ Jesus my Lord" (vs. 8)? Yes, truly. But yet he could cry, "To know Him!" although he knew Him better, perhaps, than any other: he still longed to know Him more and more. And as we cannot appropriate what we do not know, so as Paul learned to know his Lord better and better, he longed more and more to appropriate Him.

And I also can say, I have been appropriated by Christ Jesus. Like the Apostle, I am not my own, I have been bought with a price. Yes, I have been appropriated by Christ Jesus. Have you, dear reader, also been appropriated by Christ Jesus? Then you are not your own, but HIS.

A policeman may "apprehend" a criminal: and I was a criminal right enough: but it was not a "policeman" who "apprehended" me. No, it was my own beloved Lord and Savior, who bought me with His own most precious blood, and then He appropriated me: rightly enough: for when He bought me, then I belonged to Him, and Him alone. I was only a little child the day He appropriated me, or, "laid hold on" me; and He has never let go of me through all those 67 years since that day: and He will not let go of me, not until He has me safe Home in the Father's House, to go no more out. (John 10:28-30).

"Brothers, I do not reckon myself to have appropriated," so Paul continues. When this word "brothers" begins the sentence, it is always in preparation for a particularly earnest appeal. See verse 1 of our chapter, or Romans 10:1. or Galatians 3:15, etc. Perhaps there were 'brothers' in the assembly at Philippi who felt they had 'appropriated', who felt they were doing well in the Christian race, and the prize was theirs. So Paul points to himself, and says, "I do not reckon myself to have appropriated." He makes the "I" and "myself" both emphatic. If there were such brothers in Philippi, what a sweet and gentle way to reprove them! Well Paul knew that not until he gets safe Home, and knows in full the power of His resurrection, not until the Lord Jesus Christ shall change his 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 (see our chapter, verse 21); not until the flesh with all its imperfections will be done away forever, this mortal will have put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption: not until then can Paul say: "I have obtained! I am perfected! I have appropriated!" Meanwhile, as the children sing: "All, all above is treasured, and found in Christ alone."1

In the meantime there is "but one thing." The Apostle is too occupied with the race to stop to write, "One thing I do." He takes for granted we will understand that a man running such a race cannot waste words. I told you about the hundred yard dash in which I ran soon after going to school. (I did not win that beautiful little silver cup). Well, the following October was the time when they ran 'the steeplechase'. It was five

miles across open country, through a river and streams, over fences and plowed fields, up hill and down hill, and then along a dusty country road to the goal. I was passing the gymnasium one day, when the trainer called me over, and asked if I was running in the steeplechase. “Oh, no,” I replied, “I never could run five miles!” But he insisted that I enter; and so I found myself lined up for the start: the pistol went, and we were away. I can assure you that for those five miles I did but one thing. I knew where the goal was, and the one thing I did was to press on towards it. Sometimes the going was hard, especially when a plowed field came after a stream, and your shoes were full of water. There was never a thought to stop and rest, nor look around to see how the other fellows were getting on; and at last, in the distance, I could see the goal, along the country road, down a little hill, and then perhaps a hundred yards on the straight. There were four or five boys a little ahead of me, but when I saw the goal, forgetting the things behind, and stretching forward with every bit of strength I had, down to the goal I pressed, passed the boys, and got in ahead. The trainer put his arm around me, and said, “Well done!” and I was as pleased as if I had won the race, though there may have been fifty boys ahead of me.

I think it must have been a race something like the steeplechase the Apostle ran: though they all tell me it was the marathon he had in mind, and maybe it is so. But most of us are running a race like the steeplechase: there are all sorts of difficulties in the way: streams to cross, plowed fields to get over, fences to climb, and perhaps we may even have to cross a river before we reach the goal. But never mind, it is well worthwhile. For some of us the goal is almost in sight: we can almost see ‘the Trainer’ waiting for us. Think you that our minds are on the difficulties of the way we have passed? Are we wondering how the other fellow is getting on? Oh, no! One thing I do, forgetting the things behind, and straining forward to the things ahead, down to the goal I press. And there is our Trainer, just waiting to receive us, and if so be He should take us in His arms, and say “Well Done!” will it not infinitely more than make up for all the difficulties and fatigue of the race?

Beloved reader, “Are you running that race? Have you entered for it yet? Can you say, ‘One thing I do’?” May God help us to be true followers of that runner whose record we have been pondering.

But perhaps some will question, “What are the things behind that the Apostle says he forgets?” He does not tell us: he does not say if they were the victories or the failures. But I think it is anything and everything that would take our eyes off Christ. I think it is like Psa. 45:10: “Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty.” When Rebecca was going through the desert she would have had nothing if she had forgotten Isaac. Isaac was the attraction, the object before her heart, and I doubt not her heart was filled with thoughts of him; and in a sense she forgot her own people and her father’s house: but I do not suppose the Lord meant that she should never think of them again: but Isaac was the supreme object of her heart. We find the Apostle, when occasion served, remembered both his victories and his failures: See 2 Cor. 11:22 to 12:7; Acts 22:20; 24:21; 1 Cor. 15:9; but his heart was not set on either. To remember our victories tends to make us proud: to remember our failures tends to cast us down and discourage us, so we are tempted to give up. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. He knows the failure and the sin; and He knows if we have confessed it, and it is all forgiven: He does not cast it up against us. So let us take Him at His word, and forget it: not surely to make us careless: but to magnify His grace. The night after Paul failed when standing before the Council, (Acts 23:2-7), the Lord Himself came to him in the prison, (He did not send an angel, as in Acts 12:7), and He said to him, “Be of good cheer, Paul” (Acts 23:11). He used His own special word, “Tharsei,” (cheer up!) that He so often used when down here. But not a single word of the failure did He mention. Paul, I doubt not, had confessed it, and it was forgiven; and the Lord would not bring it up again. So it seems to me the Lord means us to forget everything that would distract us, whether good or whether bad, whether victories or whether defeats. If the latter, confess it, and believe the Lord’s promise to forgive, and then press on.

Now we are nearing the end of the race: the prize is in view: “Down to the goal I press unto (or, for) the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.”

Before we look at the prize, we must consider the calling. We read much about our calling. The following quotations are from the New Translation, by Mr. Darby.

We are “called ones of Christ Jesus” (Rom. 1:6; see the note in New Translation).

We are “called saints,” or, “saints by calling” (Rom. 1:7; see the note).

It is a “holy calling” (2 Tim. 1:9).

It is a “heavenly calling” (Heb. 3:1).

Paul prays we should “know what is the hope of His calling” (Eph. 1:18).

It is a “calling of God.... not subject to repentance” (Rom. 11:29).

We are exhorted “to walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye have been called” (Eph. 4:1).

What, then, does it mean— “the calling on high of God on Christ Jesus”? When, as a child, I ran in that hundred yard dash, I might have said: “Down to the goal I press for the prize of the hundred yard dash.” “The hundred yard dash” described the race I was running. So “the calling on high” (vs. 14) I think describes the race Paul was running. It is the calling “which bears the character of the world above.... the calling whose origin, nature, and goal are heavenly.” (Cremer’s Lexicon).

But I think it may include the call to that race: just as the trainer called me to run in the steeplechase. In the marathon race the herald proclaimed:

When the marathon race was finished, and the prize won, it is said the winner was called up before the Emperor, or other high personage, who had his seat above the rest: and this high official handed him the prize. “The calling” may include this: but it seems usually to refer to the pathway of the saint down here.

And what is the prize that Paul so valued? I think the poet is not far wrong when he sings:

The prize for the winner of the marathon race was a crown of leaves— a fading crown: but our prize is an unfading one. We read of some of these crowns that the Lord promises to His saints: “A crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day:

and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James 1:12).

"Feed the flock of God.... and when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Peter 5:2, 4).

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

The word translated 'crown' in each of these passages is stephanos, from which we get our name `Stephen', and is really the 'victor's wreath'. His enemies gave our Lord a crown of thorns, and it is the same word: for I think His Father saw in it the victor's wreath: but soon he was crowned with another `victor's wreath', even the first martyr, for His Name's sake.

"On His head were many crowns" (Rev. 19:12): here the word is the kingly crown: the 'diadem'. And HE wears both the victor's wreath, and "many diadems": and He is worthy of all.

To Israel, the Lord says: "In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people" (Isa. 28:5). And so I think we are not wrong in supposing that each of the crowns He promises His people today, tell us of Christ our Lord. And I think in Rev. 4:10 we learn what His saints will do with those crowns that He so graciously gives them: "The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power." What a joy it will be in that day, if we have a crown to cast before Him! May you and I dear reader, taste of that joy!

But there is a note of warning that we do well to heed: "Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). The crown tells of reward, and that is an entirely different thing to eternal life, which is the free gift of God; and none who have it will ever lose it, or perish. But we may lose our crown, and be ashamed before Him at His coming. And notice this warning is given to those in Philadelphia. Well is it indeed, if those who pride themselves on representing this church (and I grieve to say there are such) take serious heed to this warning: but let us each remember the warning is meant for ourselves. Do not let us reckon that we have already obtained the prize, or that we are sure to obtain it. These verses are intended, I believe, to stir us up to press on for it.

And soon, very soon, the prize day will be here. "Yet a very little while He that comes, will come and will not delay" (Heb. 10:37 New Translation). And then we will hear that shout— 'that great commanding shout' —that calls us up on high—

"Arise, My Love, My Fair One, and Come Away!" (Song of Sol. 2:13).

ONE THING

"Not one thing hath failed Josh. 23:14

One thing have I desired of the Lord. Psa. 27:4

One thing thou lackest Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22

One thing is needful Luke 10:42

One thing I know John 9:25

One thing I do Phil. 3:13

Be not ignorant of this one thing" 2 Peter 3:8

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 34: That I May Know Him

1. That I may gain Christ: and

2. (That) I-may-be-found in Him,

3. Not having my-own righteousness, the (righteousness) from law, but the (righteousness) through faith of-Christ, the righteousness from God, on-the-ground-of that faith;

4. To-know Him and

5. The power of-His resurrection and

6. Partnership of-His sufferings,

7. Being-conformed to-His death,

8. If by-any-means I-shall-arrive at the resurrection, the-(one) from the-dead.

Philippians 3:9-11

Our last chapter closed with the one great "gain" for which Paul was ready to cast away not only all the "gains" he had enumerated, but "all things." That "gain" was CHRIST.

When a man gains a great and beautiful estate, he will find as he comes to know it better, that with the estate, or, included in the estate, are many other gains. Not only is there the mansion, which filled his eyes at first: but there are beautiful gardens, a lovely park, and a multitude of other things that he learns to value, as more and more he gets to know his newfound gain.

So is it with CHRIST. And now, in verses 9 to 11, the Apostle tells us of some of these other gains that he obtained with Christ when HE became his gain. We will find seven fresh “gains,” making eight in all: and we will find that the eighth is the resurrection from among the dead.

We spoke in the last chapter of the first part of this Scripture: “That I may have Christ for my gain.” Now, the Lord helping us, we will ponder the seven treasures we find in Christ. First—

“That I may be found in Him” (vs. 9).

In the 24th chapter of Isaiah we read of the most terrible judgments that are going to sweep over this world: “The inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left” (Isa. 24:6). In the first verse of chapter 26 we read of a song that is to be sung in the land of Judah: even in the face of such awful judgments—

And then comes ‘perfect peace’, (verse 3), our refuge being in that city, hidden safely, ‘until the indignation is overpast’. (verse 20). And then in chapter 32:2 we read, “A man shall be as an hiding place.” Yes, ‘the Man Christ Jesus’ is our hiding place, and when we are ‘found in Him’ we are safe, we have perfect peace, and even a song in our mouths. It is like the city of refuge in Num. 35, that the Lord provided for the manslayer. He is liable to death from the avenger of blood, but when he forsakes all his own efforts to save himself, and just flees to the city of refuge, he is safe: he may have perfect peace, for he is safely hidden from the judgment that was his due. When he is ‘found’ in the city of refuge, none may touch him.

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What the guilty sinner, liable to judgment, needs most of all is righteousness: but how can man be just with God? How can a condemned sinner be counted righteous? Naturally we would all think it is utterly impossible for a just God to justify a guilty sinner: but God Himself has found a way to be just, and the justifier of even such. So righteousness is the next thing the Apostle speaks of for the one who has Christ for his gain. But it is not, he says, ‘my righteousness’, or, ‘a righteousness of my own’. In Greek there are two ways of saying ‘my righteousness’. The usual way would be to say, ‘the righteousness of me’, where `me’ is a pronoun. But we can also say ‘my righteousness’, where ‘my’ is an adjective agreeing with ‘righteousness’. In this case ‘my’ tells the kind of righteousness. And this is the way the Spirit of God puts it here. And of what kind is ‘my righteousness’? Isa. 64 tells us “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” So Paul may well say, “That I may be found in Him, not having my righteousness” (vs. 9). No! Paul wants no filthy rags, no refuse, when found in Him. Instead he can say, “He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10). Such is the righteousness of God that He freely gives to those who are ‘found in Him’. This righteousness is ‘through faith of Christ’, (some translate, ‘through faith in Christ’), the righteousness from God, ‘on the ground of that faith’. Notice the Apostle speaks of `righteousness from law’, and of ‘righteousness from God’: but of ‘righteousness through faith’; for faith is the means, not the source, of righteousness. “It is God that justifieth” (Rom. 8:33). He alone is the source: for the righteousness of which law is the source, is unobtainable by man.

We often hear people speak of ‘the righteousness of Christ’, but I do not think the Bible ever speaks thus: though of course He is absolutely righteous. But the Bible speaks of ‘the righteousness of God’. Six times in the first three chapters of Romans do we find `the righteousness of God’, or, ‘His righteousness’. We often hear men speak of Christ’s righteous life as reckoned to us for righteousness. This is completely contrary to the Word of God. Christ is made unto us righteousness (1 Cor. 1:3): but it is Christ, who died for our sins, and is raised again the third day: not the life of Christ down here: Who is our righteousness. If we are ‘found in Him’, then we have that robe of righteousness to cover us:

And notice that righteousness is ‘through faith of Christ’. We get exactly the same expression in Rom. 3:22. Faith is like the coupling that links the train to the locomotive. The coupling could never pull the train one inch: but through, or by, the coupling, the locomotive pulls it safely.

Notice, also, that in the end of verse 9 the Spirit changes from ‘through faith’, to, ‘on-the-ground-of that faith’. It is the same word as is used for the man who “built his house upon the rock” (Matt. 7:24). Christ is the Rock, and Christ is the only foundation for faith: but the righteousness of God is reckoned to us ‘on that faith’, or, ‘on-the-ground-of that faith’. The words translated ‘that faith’ are literally ‘the faith’. But as we have pointed out, the article ‘the’ is like a finger pointing: and I think it points back to the words ‘through faith of Christ’ (where there is no article), and so I have translated it ‘on-the-ground-of that faith’.

What does ‘the righteousness of God’ mean? First, of course, it tells us that God is absolutely righteous. But there is more. Christ glorified God on the earth, He finished the work that God gave Him to do: and God was righteous in raising Him from the dead, and setting Him at His Own right hand in the heavens. But Christ was made sin for us, He was made a curse for us, He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The very fact that God is righteous in raising Christ from the dead, and setting Him on high in the glory, is proof that all our sins, our curse, are gone forever: and so God is righteous in accepting us in the Beloved; and He is just (or righteous) in justifying us. Just as it would have been unrighteous not to raise Christ from the dead when He had finished the work God gave Him to do: so it would be unrighteous not to count righteous those who forsake all confidence in themselves, and trust only to Christ, and His finished work. So I count on ‘the righteousness of God’ to reckon me righteous. “It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?” (Rom. 8:33-34). Now I am `found in Him’, and “there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). There cannot be. “Christ Jesus.... of God is made unto us.... righteousness” (1 Cor. 1:30). If any one asks, “How can a wretched sinner like you be justified?” I may answer: “Look at Christ. He is my righteousness. Is there any unrighteousness in Him? Surely, surely not! God sees me ‘in Him’. God looks at Christ, not at me. So He sees me righteous.”

The Chinese character for righteous tells the same story in a most beautiful way. Above is the character for “Lamb”, and below is the character for “I” or “me.” So I am completely covered by the Lamb: and when God looks down at me, He sees only the Lamb— the spotless Lamb of God.

But there is another most remarkable Scripture: “He made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). God speaks of Christians as `the righteousness of God in Him’: in Christ, and only in Him. Another has said, “Never think of yourself as apart from Christ.” If one asks, “Is God righteous to justify sinners?” The answer is to look at the sinners who are justified. See the price that God paid to justify them. He gave His only begotten Son. “He spared not His own Son” (Rom. 8:32). There is the proof that God is just, and at the same time the Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. (Rom. 3:26). And so the sinner is made— he demonstrates— the righteousness of God, in Christ.

But let us never forget that this righteousness is from God, by the blood of Christ, and it is through faith.

The Scriptures tell us we are—

1. Justified by grace Rom. 3:24; Titus 3:7.

2. Justified by blood Rom. 5:9.

3. Justified by resurrection Rom. 4:25.

4. Christ Himself is our justification, or, righteousness 1 Cor. 1:30.

5. Justified through faith Phil. 3:9; Rom. 3:28; 5:1.

6. Justified by works James 2:14 to 26.

7. Justified by God Phil. 3:9 & Rom. 8:33.

With Christ for his gain: being found in Him, not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness that is from God, what does Paul want next? “That I may know Him!” (vs. 10). or, literally, “to know Him!” And did he not ‘know Him’? Surely he did, as few others have ever known Him: but he could say, “Now I know in part,” (1 Cor. 13:12): and no matter how large a part, that could not satisfy until he could say, “I know even as I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12). Paul’s desire was not to know about Him, blessed as that is. There was a university professor who could challenge his class to begin any verse in the Bible, and he would finish it: but I sadly fear, though he knew the written Word so well, he did not know the Living Word at all. Most of us know a certain amount about Her Majesty the Queen: some of us have even seen her drive by: but that does not mean we know her. It was altogether something different for which Paul longed. This intellectual knowledge of Christ is not to be despised. I suppose it must come first, before we come to “know Him.” It is preliminary, introductory, subordinate, to the knowledge spoken of in Philippians 3:10. What do we mean when we say of a man, I know him? Do we not mean, I have kept company with him— I have talked with him— I have spent time with him— I have learned to know his thoughts and his ways, I have been admitted to his confidence. What does a child mean when he says: “I know my father: I know what he would like”? Surely it means he knows his father’s inmost heart: he knows his thoughts, without the necessity of uttering a word. We have no right to say we know Christ, merely because we have read of Him in the Scriptures. Paul had suffered the loss of all things for the surpassingness of the knowledge (as he says with such affection) of Christ Jesus my Lord: but he longs to know Him better still. The aged Apostle John writes to the fathers “because ye have known Him that is from the beginning” (1 John 2:13). Perhaps through a long life— a life of service to their Lord— they had learned to “know Him.” And what about the “little children”? “I write unto you little children, because ye have known the Father” (1 John 2:13). And none can come to the Father except by the Son: and so, in their measure, no doubt the little children knew “Him” also. How encouraging for you dear Lambs of the flock! And He has given Him: “And this is Life Eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

No, it is not some special grace, reserved for certain special people, that they should “know Him.” All who have eternal life “know Him,” they know God, and Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent— Yes, even the babes know Him: and yet he who knew Him best, could cry— Oh, “To know Him!” It is like the child, who had always lived in an inland town, when first he went to the seaside: he kept telling all his friends on his return, “I have seen the sea!”. And it was true, even though he had only seen a few miles of it; and of all the length and breadth and depth of it, he knew little or nothing. And so the babe in Christ can say with truth: “I know Him!” And the Apostle Paul can cry from the depths of his heart, and can cry truly— “To know Him!” Down here that craving will never be satisfied: the better we know Him, the more we love to know Him better still. For while in the body down here, it must ever be: “Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12). Lord, haste the day!

And though it is true that all who have eternal life, whether ‘fathers’ or ‘babes’ “know God, and Jesus Christ whom” (John 17:3) God hath sent: yet let us always remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father” (Matt. 11:27) There are ways in which we know the Father and the Son: but the finite can never fathom the Infinite: and so there are ways in which “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father”.

There are those who come in constant contact with Her Majesty the Queen in the affairs of the government of Her realm, who can truly say, “We know Her Majesty.” Yet they might be totally ignorant of her intimate family affairs, and know nothing of her as the mother of her children. I suppose no one on earth knows the Queen as Prince Charles knows her for he knows her as ‘mother’. And no one knows Prince Charles as Her Majesty knows him, for she knows him as ‘son’. This is a very feeble illustration, but it will perhaps help us to understand that it is perfectly true when we say, ‘I know Christ, the Son of God’, and it is also true that “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father” (Luke 10:22).

Let us humbly, reverently bow before Him, and accept this truth, without seeking to pry into those relationships which are beyond us: yet ever, like the apostle, seeking to ‘know Him’ more and better!

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But the apostle’s longing was not only “to know Him.” In the Greek Testament there is no period, not even a comma, after ‘Him’. It reads: “To know Him and the power of His resurrection and partnership of His sufferings.” Another has said: “The essence of knowing Christ consists in knowing the power of His resurrection.” Every Christian knows that Christianity has its root and foundation in the death of our blessed Savior. But if it had been possible that death could have held the Savior in his power: death, instead of being the foundation of joy, and the certainty of salvation, would have been the source of a black despair which nothing could have dissipated. It is the resurrection which throws its bright beams even into the dark tomb of Christ: that tomb which seemed to mean victory for the adversary. It is resurrection which explains the

reason of that momentary submission to the power of the devil, and subjection to the necessary judgment of God.

It is by resurrection, and the glory which shall follow, that the foundation and hopes of the Christian are bound together. It is by resurrection that justification and that which is the power of the Christian's life— sanctification, are united. Not only is He raised again for our justification, but in Christ risen, we are in Him as risen and sanctified in the power of a new life.

So we may see that Paul found in the resurrection not only the evidence of the foundation of his faith (Rom. 1:4), and the proof of the accomplishment of the satisfaction for sin (1 Cor. 15:17), but much more. The resurrection was to Paul, as to Peter, the object and source of a living hope, the power of life within. So, he sought to know the power of His resurrection.

Except for John, in Revelation, Paul is the only one of the apostles of whom it is recorded that he saw the Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection glory: "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun" (Acts 26:13). Did he not, then, know "the power of His resurrection" (vs. 10)? Yes, surely; more and better, perhaps, than any other living man: but he would know that power still more and still better. It was the sight of the God of glory (Acts 7:2) that kept Abraham true and faithful for a hundred years (Gen. 12:4 & 25:7): and that sight taught him something of "the power of His resurrection" (vs. 10). And it was the sight of "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:8) in resurrection that also taught Paul something of "the power of His resurrection" (vs. 10). A friend of mine told me that when he first came to China he preached 'Christ died for our sins', and souls were saved, but the new Christians did not stand. In his anguish he searched himself and his preaching; and realized that he had not preached, `and He rose again the third day'. Now he preached not only the death of his Lord, but also His resurrection. As many, or more, were saved, but now they stood firm and true. They, too, learned something of "the power of His resurrection" (vs. 10).

Paul never forgot that sight on the Damascus road of the Lord of glory, in His resurrection power and glory. Three times over in the little book of Acts do we read that story. But that sight only gave him a deeper longing to better know "the power of His resurrection" (vs. 10). You may hear Paul describe something of that power in Eph. 1, verses 19 to 22. But as we read, and ponder, such a Scripture, we are like the Queen of Sheba as she gazed on the glory of Solomon: "there was no more spirit in her" (2 Chron. 9:4). And yet she had to own that she had believed not the report in her own land; even though 'the other half was not told me'. Paul longed to know 'the other half'! And it is as we look off unto Jesus, off from all this world may offer, and with unveiled face we behold— now, it is true, as in a glass— the glory of the Lord, (His resurrection glory), that we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18).

But there is more in this one amazing sentence: "To know Him and the power of His resurrection and partnership of His sufferings." Having seen the Lord in glory, and having learned to know in part the power of His resurrection, the apostle understood the path which led Him there: a path of suffering and death: and he longed to follow Him even in that path, if need be, in order to be where his Lord is, and in the glory with Him. HE had said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone.... He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am there shall also My servant be." (John 13:24-26). That was the burning desire of the apostle's life: to follow Him, and to be with Him.

And so he would have partnership of His sufferings, as he had been a witness of His glory. Peter, you recall, was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Peter 5:1).

Yet he also knew what it meant to be "partaker of Christ's sufferings." (1 Peter 4:13).

Notice how often the suffering and the glory are linked together: and so it is right there should be no pause between "the power of His resurrection" (vs. 10) and "partnership of His sufferings." In the Greek Testament they are linked together in a peculiar way that we cannot express in English. With power there is the article: 'the power', but there is no article with partnership, because they are so closely linked that one article serves both: 'the power.... and partnership'. The two are inseparable. If he is to know the power of His resurrection, he must also know partnership of His sufferings: but perhaps we should put it the other way: If he knows partnership of His sufferings, then he will also know the power of His resurrection.

You recall when Saul of Tarsus had that first sight of His glory, the Lord sent His messenger to "show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). The path of suffering is one from which the flesh shrinks: but if we know the power of His resurrection, we will find it enough even for this path. Ponder 2 Cor. 11:23-28, and see something of what this soldier of Jesus Christ suffered for his Master's sake: and there was power to carry him through all.

"To know Him and the power of His resurrection and partnership of His sufferings, being conformed to His death."

The hymn says:

At the murder of the Son of God, His accusation was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin, to show that the whole world had a part in it: Hebrew tells of the religious world: Greek tells of the literary and scientific world: and Latin (representing Rome) tells of the government and power of this world. All had their part. And so Paul says: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14).

Soon after the Japanese attacked China they murdered the beloved son of a very dear friend of mine. From that day my friend's life was changed. Others, for the sake of gain, might fraternize with the Japanese: but my friend, never! From that day he ever bore about the dying of his son: that murder severed any possible ties with the murderers. From that day and onward, he was conformed to his death. That is a little picture of his Lord and Paul: and I hope in some small measure of my Lord and me. (2 Cor. 4:10, New Translation).

One who has true communion with Christ's sufferings cannot share in the world's delights, or settle down to live at ease and in luxury in it. The beautiful homes and the too common luxury of the saints tell only too plainly how little they know the meaning, and the power, of the words: "being conformed to His death" (vs. 10). 'The animating principle which governs the Apostle, and impels him on his course, is the constraining love of Christ; and whenever this is operating in any force there is a corresponding distaste for what the prince of this world has to offer. God had shined in Paul's heart to give there the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Death, then, and not life, was his choice as to all natural things— Christ's death, even the death of the cross, to which the High and Lofty One had submitted in a slave's form for his and our sakes. So long as he remained, then, in this body upon earth, his place should be in spirit with his suffering Redeemer outside the camp.' (Arthur Pridham).

But there is more. This word translated “being conformed,” (vs. 10) is the present participle passive, and tells of a process that is going on continuously. As we gaze on our suffering Savior, we are gradually conformed to His death: just as when we gaze on the glory of the Lord we are gradually changed into the same image (I take it, that, ‘from glory to glory’ has this meaning). (2 Cor. 3:18). Indeed, Dr. Vaughan, from whom I have had untold help in this lovely Epistle, translates this sentence: “being gradually conformed to His death.”

The word ‘being conformed’ is a remarkable word. This is the only place in the New Testament it appears as a verb. But as a noun we meet it again in two other passages: Rom. 8:29, and in the 21st verse of this same chapter in Philippians. Surely the Spirit of God means to link up these two verses, when He puts these two exceedingly rare words, that are almost the same, so close together. And what does Philippians 3:21 say? “We eagerly await the Lord Jesus Christ (as) Savior, Who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself.” (See New Translation: J. N. Darby). Just now we may gradually be conformed to His death; soon; I doubt not, very soon; in a moment, HE is going to transform (an entirely different word) these bodies of ours, some of them old and worn and bearing the scars of warfare. Yes, He will transform these bodies of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory. Surely that should be motive enough to make the glories of this world fade, that our deepest longing may be that day by day we are “being conformed to His death” (vs. 10).1

“If by-any-means I-shall-arrive unto the out-resurrection, the-(one) out-from (the) dead-(ones).” We have now reached the last of these treasures that the apostle has listed as being found in Christ. This is the eighth, the resurrection number, and it tells of the resurrection on which Paul had his eyes fixed. We must remember this follows immediately after Paul’s longing to be conformed to His death: then, immediately, our eyes are turned to resurrection. We get a very similar thought in Rom. 8:17: “If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.”

The opening words, “If by any means,” (vs. 11) tell us of the difficulty. “With men this is impossible” (Matt. 19:26). I do not think they are intended to suggest the slightest doubt in Paul’s mind as to his arrival at that resurrection. Rather, I think he is telling us that he is prepared to tread any path that is necessary to arrive at it: including the path that leads through death: and this is the path of which he has just been speaking.

The next part of the verse may be translated quite correctly in two ways:

“If by any means I shall arrive unto....”

or, “If by any means I might arrive unto....”

The first way of translating uses shall, and makes the definite and positive assurance that we shall arrive at the resurrection. The second way uses might, and leaves room for a doubt as to whether we reach there or not. As far as Greek grammar goes, either way is correct. However, we get a very similar expression in Rom. 1:10, “If by any means I shall have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.” In this case there is no ambiguity, and it can correctly only be translated “I shall have....” So it would seem that this is how the Spirit of God would have us understand this passage in Philippians. “The combination, if by any means I shall, brings into striking union the two thoughts, the difficulty, and the certainty.” (Dr. Vaughan).

And unto what is it that he is so desperately anxious to arrive? “Unto the out-resurrection, the-(one) out-from (the) dead-(ones).” It is a remarkable word, found only here in the New Testament, that we have translated the “out-resurrection” (Acts 23:6). Christ is risen from the dead, “and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20). The “firstfruit” is the sample of what is to follow. When Christ arose, His was an “out-resurrection”. That resurrection morning He came out from the grave; while all around were thousands of graves untouched by resurrection: He came “out-from the dead ones” around Him. And this is a sample, a pattern, of the resurrection on which Paul had fixed his eyes. The Bible does not tell us of a general resurrection when all the dead, both saved and lost, will be raised. On the contrary it tells us quite plainly that “the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thess. 4:16-17). It tells us plainly that “the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5-6). This is the resurrection Paul longed for, if by any means he shall arrive at it.

There is no question whatever of it’s being two different classes of believers: some who overcame, and some who did not overcome, and must pass through judgment. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself tells us quite plainly: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24: See New Translation). Listen again: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1) (Rom. 8:1: Note that the last part of verse 1, as shown in our Authorized Version, should, not be there). Of that first resurrection, we read: “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:23). You will notice that the test is “Are we Christ’s?” (2 Cor. 10:7). not, “Have we overcome?”

Beloved Reader: Let me affectionately ask, “Are you amongst the blessed who will have their part in the first resurrection, the ‘out-resurrection, the one out-from the-dead’? Will you be ‘found in Christ’ in that day? Have you a righteousness, not your own, but ‘from God’, that spotless ‘robe of righteousness’? Do you know anything of the power of His resurrection and partnership with His sufferings? Do you know practically what it means to be conformed to His death?” These are most solemn questions. Do not rest until you can answer them, as you would wish them to be answered in ‘that day’. The first four verses of 1 Cor. 15, tell you how you may be fitted for these things.

.... that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death. (Phil. 3:10)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 33: All Gains But Refuse

“But, nay rather, I even do count all-(things) to-be loss on-account-of the surpassingness of-the knowledge of-Christ Jesus my Lord, on-account-of whom I-have-suffered-the-loss-of (or, I-have-suffered-forfeit-of) all those (things), and do-count (them but bits of) refuse (or,

dung) in-order-that I-may-gain Christ (or, have Christ for my gain).”

Philippians 3:8

Before we begin to meditate on this verse, I think we should consider a little further some of those things which Paul lost, or forfeited, on account of Christ. We have seen in our last chapter seven amazing “gains” that nearly all would hold most dear because of a religion they loved: but Paul had more than that to forfeit.

In Acts 21:39, Paul tells the chief captain that he is “a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city” (Acts 21:39). In chapter 22:3, Paul tells the Jews, “I am verily a Jew, born in Tarsus” (Acts 22:3). And in chapter 22:27-28 he tells the chief captain that he is a Roman, (free) born. In Sir William Ramsey’s book, “St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen,” he tells us some most interesting things about these three passages of Scripture. I will quote: “According to the law of his country, he (Paul) was first of all a Roman citizen. That character superseded all others before the law and in the general opinion of society; and placed him in the aristocracy of any provincial town. In the first century, when the citizenship was still closely guarded, (it) may be taken as a proof that his family was one of distinction and at least moderate wealth....”

“Paul was, in the second place, a ‘Tarsian, a citizen of a distinguished city’ (21:39; 9:11). He was not merely a person born in Tarsus, owing to the accident of his family being there: he had a citizen’s rights in Tarsus.... Roman (citizens) in a provincial city commonly filled the position of high-class citizens, and even had magistracies pressed upon them by general consent. Now, if Paul’s family had merely emigrated to Tarsus from Judaea some years before his birth, neither he nor his father would have been `Tarsians’, but merely ‘residents’.”

“In the third place, Paul was ‘a Hebrew sprung from Hebrews’. The expression is a remarkable one. It is not used to a Jewish audience, but to a Greek Church (Phil. 3:5), and it is similar to a familiar expression among the Greeks: ‘a priest sprung from priests’ is a term commonly applied to members of the great sacerdotal families which play so important a part in the society of Asian cities. He was a Jew at least as much as he was a Tarsian and a Roman, as regards his early surroundings; and it is obvious that the Jewish side of his nature and education proved infinitely the most important, as his character developed. But it is a too common error to ignore the other sides. Many.... seems to think only of his words, 22:3, ‘I am a Jew born in Tarsus,’ and to forget that he said a moment before, ‘I am a Jew, a Tarsian, a citizen of no mean city.’ To the Hebrews he emphasizes his Jewish character, and his birth in Tarsus is added as an accident: but to Claudius Lysias, a Greek-Roman, he emphasizes his Tarsian citizenship.... Now there is no inconsistency between these descriptions of himself. Most of us have no difficulty in understanding that a Jew at the present day may be a thoroughly patriotic English citizen, and yet equally proud of his ancient and honorable origin....”

“If Paul belonged to a family of wealth and position, how comes it that in great part of his career (but not in the whole....) he shows all the marks of poverty....?”

“Now, as Paul himself says, he had been brought up in strict Judaic feeling.... as a Pharisee; and we must infer that the spirit of his family was strongly Pharisaic. The whole history of the Jews shows what was likely to be the feeling among his parents and brothers and sisters, when he not merely became a Christian, but went to the Gentiles. Their pride was outraged; and we should naturally expect that such a family would regard Paul as an apostate, a foe to God and the chosen race, and disgrace to the family; his own relatives might be expected to be his most bitter enemies. Looking at these probabilities, we see a special force in Paul’s words to the Philippians, 3:8, that he had given up all for Christ, ‘for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them but refuse’. These emphatic words suit the mouth of one who had been disowned by his family, and reduced from a position of wealth and influence in his nation to poverty and contempt.”

Let us now seek, with the Lord’s help, to meditate a little on the beautiful verse before us. It begins with five little words, one after the other, which literally translated are: “yea, indeed, therefore, at-least, also (or, even).” But we may not take them literally: we must try and find what the Holy Spirit is seeking to tell us by putting them together in this way. The three middle words form a combination which expresses the correction of a foregoing statement as either incorrect, or inadequate. It was inadequate to say, “I counted (long ago) these things to be loss— these national and religious privileges of which we have been speaking: no, indeed, not only did I count them loss long ago, when first I was converted, but I still do count them so. And not only these things, but all things, do I count loss— my social standing, my family, my wealth, my all do I count loss for the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord”. As we have seen in our last chapter, Paul changes “counted” to “do count,” and “these things,” to “all things.” This was to correct the inadequate statement in the seventh verse. This string of little words is to prepare us for this change, and I think helps us to see the vehemence and strength of Paul’s conviction as to the worth of the exchange he had made “on account of Christ” (vs. 7).

We have seen that our Lord Jesus Christ, “Who subsisting in the form of God, He counted not as a means of gain the being equal with God, but made Himself empty.” His servant Paul sought to follow his Master, in such measure as a human being could. Paul, too, had his gains, and in his measure he emptied himself; cast them all away; counted them not as a means of gain, but rather reckoned them to be loss and refuse. And for what? “For the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” It is not for the sake of the superiority of the knowledge (the fact that it is superior, or more excellent), but for the sake of the knowledge which is surpassing all else, that he counts all things to be loss. And the more of that knowledge he gained, the more he longed for more of it; so when we get to verse 10, we hear him cry: “That I may know Him!” (vs. 10). O my beloved readers, what do we know of that urgency to “know Him”? Of what have we suffered the loss, for the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord?

And you notice Paul does not say, “our Lord.” No, it is “my Lord.” Outside of this Epistle Paul does not often speak in this way: Rom. 1:8; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 2:20; Philem. 1:4; (perhaps there are others, I do not recall more): but in this little Epistle we find it three times: 1:3; 3:8; and 4:19. I think we can understand the suitability of this: there is a warmth, a fervor, that perhaps we see nowhere else: and so he writes: “Christ Jesus my Lord” (vs. 8). We get something the same in the Song of Solomon: “My Beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song of Sol. 2:16). “I am my Beloved’s and my Beloved is mine” (Song of Sol. 6:3). I wonder can we truthfully say, as shown out in our daily walk: “my Lord”?

Paul cried, “I even do count all things to be loss on account of the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of Whom I have suffered the loss of all those things, and do count them but refuse, in order that I may gain Christ: (or, have Christ for my gain.)” The word translated “suffered the loss of,” (vs. 8) echoes the word “loss” used twice before. But it has also the meaning of a fine, or penalty imposed by a court. “I was fined all things I possessed.” Paul thus expresses the utter confiscation of all that he had: his aristocratic position,

his wealth, comforts, reputation (you remember the One Who “made Himself of no reputation” (ch. 2:7)), family, friends, society, interests, prospects and ambitions; and still more, to such a man, all his religious advantages both by birth and training: hopes, standing, confidences, such as we saw in our last chapter. All were cast away in a moment, at the sight of the Lord of Glory. The God of Glory appeared also to Abraham, and he also left all. Beloved, were our eyes fixed more steadfastly on the Lord of Glory— “looking off unto Jesus”— might not we too be more ready to cast away many of the things that now drag us down?

(You will notice that twice we get the little word “all” in this verse: the first is without the article “the,” the second with it. We have seen that the article is like a finger pointing: in this case pointing, I think, back to the first “all,” and so I have translated it, “all those things,” (1 Cor. 8:10) to which he had been referring above).

The word translated refuse is used only here in the New Testament, and is of uncertain origin, but it may come from two Greek words, meaning “to cast to the dogs”; and there is said to be an old papyrus in which this word is used to describe “bones cast out to the dogs.” (Blaiklock). It is in the plural, and I do not know how to express this except “bits of refuse.” You will recall that in verse 2 Paul had written: “Look out for the dogs!” Then he goes on to describe all his manifold “gains,” and now he tells us they were only bits of refuse, to be cast to the dogs. It may be he is telling us that this refuse is what the Judaizers feed on. This word also may, perhaps, be rightly translated “dung” as in our English Bible. In 1 Cor. 4:13 we find two words with a very similar meaning: also used nowhere else in the New Testament.

“That I may gain Christ,” (vs. 8) or, “That I may have Christ for my gain.” In verse 7 we saw he spoke of his “gains” (plural), in verse 8 he enlarges these gains to include “all things”: wealth, home, friends, and so forth: these all are on one side of the ledger: and now we come to the crowning point: the single item: the one great “gain”: on the other side of the ledger — CHRIST!!! This one “gain” replaces all the lost items: “Whatsoever things were gains” (verse 7) I now count loss for the sake of that one gain. Oh, Beloved, have you and I discovered “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3:8), to be of such value, that all else may go? Another true servant of Christ could sing:

This passage reminds me of the merchantman (He was a wholesale merchant, who went abroad for His wares). He was seeking pearls: and having found one exceedingly valuable pearl, He went away “and sold all things whatever He had,” (indeed, the word is that used for selling a slave, as though He had given Himself also), and He bought it. (Matt. 13:45-46: See Greek Text). And the day is coming when He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: for He reckons that pearl was worth all that He gave for it. And Paul will also be satisfied in that day, when awake with His likeness, he no longer knows in part: but knows in full the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

“BEYOND THE BRIGHTNESS OF THE SUN”

(Continued)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 32: Loss and Profit

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

“And not confiding in flesh, although I have confidence even in flesh; if any other think to-confide in flesh, I rather: in-(the matter of) circumcision, eight-days (old); from (the) race of-Israel; of-(the) tribe of-Benjamin; a-Hebrew (sprung) from Hebrews; as-to law, a Pharisee; as-to zeal, persecuting the church; as-to righteousness, the (righteousness) in law, being blameless; but whatever (things) were to-me gains, these I-counted for-the-sake-of the Christ loss.”

Philippians 3:4-7

In our last chapter we spoke of the first few words quoted above: “And not confiding in flesh,” but the words that follow are so closely linked with these, that we must quote them again if the Scripture is to be clear to us. The true “circumcision,” as we saw, does not trust, or, have confidence, in the flesh. But, apparently, certain men had come to Philippi and were telling the saints they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses if they were to be saved.

These men had confidence in the flesh—just what the true circumcision had not. Now Paul is about to take his place, so to speak, alongside of these men, and compare his own credentials with theirs. The sense of the translated “I might have confidence in the flesh,” (vs. 4) as it is usually translated, is true; but Paul puts it that he actually has confidence in the flesh. (See the New Translation). And from man’s standpoint, he had entire ground for such confidence. So now he places himself at the standpoint of these Judaizing men who had come to Philippi. He continues, “If any other think to trust (or, have confidence) in flesh, I rather.” Now he states seven reasons why he might have confidence in flesh:

1. In (the matter of) circumcision, eight days old;

2. From (the) race of Israel;

3. Of (the) tribe of Benjamin;

4. A Hebrew (sprung) from Hebrews;

5. As to law, a Pharisee;

6. As to zeal, persecuting the church;

7. As to righteousness, the (righteousness) in law, being blameless.

These evil teachers seem to have pressed circumcision more than anything else, (Acts 15), so Paul begins with it. A proselyte might be circumcised at any age, but the law required a Jew to be circumcised on the eighth day: and Paul had met every requirement of the law, as far as circumcision went.

Further, he came from the race of Israel, and this title was accounted the noblest that any Jew could have (Trench); but to appreciate fully what it meant, we must turn to Rom. 9:4-5—

All these privileges belonged to Paul, because he was “from the race of Israel.” (I suppose the Spirit of God lists eight, rather than seven, as He so often does, because here CHRIST is the eighth: and the eighth speaks of a new beginning; the eighth day is the resurrection day, and in verse 11 we will find the resurrection is eighth on another list).

But not only was he from the race of Israel, he also was “of the tribe of Benjamin” (vs. 5). And Benjamin was a very favored tribe. Benjamin was one of the two sons of Jacob’s favorite wife. He was the only child of Jacob born in the Promised Land. The first king of Israel came from the tribe of Benjamin, and Saul of Tarsus bore his name. The “Holy City,” Jerusalem, was in the land of Benjamin. And the tribe of Benjamin was the only tribe to remain loyal to Judah and the House of David, when the other tribes revolted. So it was no small honor to belong to the tribe of Benjamin.

But Paul had more: he was “a Hebrew sprung from Hebrews.” He was pure Jew. Timothy’s father was a Greek: not so Saul of Tarsus: he was pure Hebrew. A man was a Jew if he traced his descent from Jacob and conformed to the religion of his fathers: but he was not counted a “Hebrew” unless he spoke the Hebrew language. (See Trench, Syn. No. 39). And Paul could hardly have spoken of himself as “a Hebrew sprung from Hebrews,” were it not that his father also had these qualifications; and so he probably spoke Hebrew from his earliest childhood; and we know he spoke it fluently: and had been “taught according to the perfect manner of the law of his fathers.” (Acts 22:2-3).

These four “gains” (as Paul calls them) came to him by birth and parentage, apart from his own volition. Now we come to those that were his by choice: “As to law, a Pharisee” (vs. 5). Speaking to King Agrippa Paul said, “After the most strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.” And to the Council he could say, “I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee” (Acts 23:6). He was, moreover, brought up in Jerusalem, at the “feet of Gamalial,” a Pharisee, a doctor of the law, and one had in reputation among all the people: apparently a wise and a good man. (Acts 22:3 & 5:34). There was no higher position in the Jews’ religion to which Paul could attain.

“As to zeal, persecuting the Church.” Now we will see how he used these privileges and attainments. Writing to the Galatians, he could say: “Ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it: and profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.” (Gal. 1:13,14). In the eyes of Saul of Tarsus, and in the eyes of most in his own nation, this was the highest proof of his devotion to God: but to Paul the Apostle, it was a grief that he never could forget: “I am the least of the apostles, and am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (1 Cor. 15:9). And see Acts 26:10-11. His part in the murder of Stephen seems to have stayed with him all his days: “When the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him” (Acts 22:20). Such is the heart of the most religious of men!

And now we come to the last of these “gains.” “As to righteousness, the (righteousness) in law, (or, such as law has in it) being blameless.” Perhaps in the sight of moral men, this righteousness is the highest attainment of all. Few there are who could truthfully follow Paul in this statement of his “gains” after the flesh. He himself says: “If any other think to trust in flesh, I rather (or, I more).” The young ruler in Mark 10:20 could say, with the honest belief that he spoke truly, “All these have I observed from my youth” (Mark 10:20). With both Saul and the young ruler, this was true in the sight of men: but both should have known it was not so in the sight of God, for the Old Testament told them this: “There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20).: or the 14th Psalm, which Paul himself quotes to prove this to us. But Saul of Tarsus in the eyes of men was blameless: none on earth could point a finger at him, and accuse him of failure to keep the law of Moses. Such was the man whom God chose to meet the attacks of these “evil workmen.” Was there one of them who could measure up to Paul? Was there one who could go through those seven “gains,” point by point, and come out with the glory (the earthly glory) which Paul could claim. I think not one.

Now let us see how Paul the Apostle, writing perhaps 30 years later, viewed all his gains. “But what things were to me gains, these I counted (or, considered, esteemed) for the sake of Christ loss.” Notice “gains” is in the plural, but “loss” is in the singular: “just one loss, one deprivation, not merely a worthless thing, but a ruinous one.” If my memory serves correctly, Canadian bank shares used to be (perhaps still are) subject to “double liability.” That meant that if the bank failed, not only did the owner of the shares lose his investment: but he was also liable to pay up to double the value of his shares: not merely were they a loss, but to many, they were utterly ruinous. Thus Paul came to consider all these great assets of his: these “gains” were not merely one great loss, but they were ruinous: and were he to hold to them, he would lose his own soul.

The passage we have been considering is like a great account book, where on one side he records all his credits: counting them up, item after item: perhaps not one before or since could set forth such an imposing array of fleshly assets. And now, Heaven is opened to him, and he gets a sight in the Glory of the Man he hated and despised, the Man Christ Jesus, and in an instant, all his gains must be put on the debit side of the ledger: all to him now are loss. “Whatever things were to me gains, these I counted for the sake of Christ loss.” Now he could sing: “I have seen the face of Jesus Tell me not of aught beside;

I have heard the voice of Jesus All my soul is satisfied.”

And so, “Whatever things were to me gains, these I counted for the sake of Christ loss.” We must reserve the next verse, verse 8, for another chapter; but I cannot resist asking you to compare two words in it, with the two words shown underlined just above, in verse 7: “these” and “counted.” The word “counted” is in the perfect tense, and indicates that Paul made this reckoning when first he met his Lord, on the road to Damascus; and that he continued to reckon it thus ever since. Now, note in verse 8 he says: “But, nay, rather, I do count (or, I am counting) all things to be loss on account of the surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Notice the two changes the Apostle makes as he goes from verse 7 to verse 8: the perfect tense becomes the present— “I counted” becomes “I do count,” and the word “these” (which referred to the seven “gains” previously listed) becomes “all.” All his righteousnesses had long since become filthy rags to him (Isa. 64:6), only to be accounted loss: but now, perhaps thirty years later, he counts, not only “these things,” but all things to be loss for the sake of the

surpassingness of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

Before we turn from this passage we must note the words, “persecuting the church” (vs. 6). From Acts 26:10-11 we learn that Paul persecuted the saints “even unto strange cities”. And it was while on his way to Damascus, a city far from Jerusalem, for this same purpose that the Lord met him. In Gal. 1:13 we read: “I persecuted the church of God.” These passages plainly show that the Holy Spirit views the church on earth, though scattered in many different places, as one church, one body. It is true the Spirit speaks of individual groups of believers in different cities as churches: as, for example, “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2). (1 Cor. 16:1). Each one is looked at as representing the whole church of God on earth: but all the various individual churches together are viewed in the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit as “the church of God” (Eph. 3:10). It is also true that the church is not perfected until the Lord comes, and the last member of Christ’s mystic body is gathered in: then all those ‘in Christ,’ whether sleeping or living, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord: thus He shall present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but holy and without blemish: perfected. (See Eph. 4:13 & 5:27). But let no man deceive you by telling you that the Scriptures do not tell us of the church of God on earth as being one body, for they plainly do teach this.

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 31: Dogs, Evil Workmen, Concision

“Look-out-for the dogs! Look-out-for the evil -workmen! Look-out-for the concision. For we, we-are the circumcision, the-(ones) worshipping by-the-Spirit of-God, and exulting in Christ Jesus, and not trusting in flesh.”

Philippians 3:2-3

The first two verses of Chapter 2 call us to be of “one mind.” But immediately after, Verse 3 exposes those evils which hinder the desire of the Spirit for this unity. Similarly, the first verse of Chapter 3 calls us to “Rejoice in the Lord,” (vs. 1) and we saw that this is the path of strength for devotedness to Christ. Now, immediately, Verses 2 and 3 expose those teachers whose evil teachings would hinder this joy in the Lord, and so hinder the power for devotedness to Christ; and these verses also give the character of those who hold the truth. We will see that these things are given to us in seven short sentences:

1. Look-out-for the dogs!

2. Look-out-for the evil workmen!

3. Look-out-for the concision!

4. For we, we are the circumcision,

5. The ones worshipping by (the) Spirit of God,

6. And exulting in Christ Jesus,

7. And not confiding in the flesh.

Notice how three times over the Apostle repeats the words: “Look-out-for the ... ” thus making them tremendously emphatic. In the Greek New Testament each of these first three sentences has only three words in it.

In Acts 15:1 we read of “certain men which came down from Judaea” to Antioch, and taught the brethren, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Actually these men, by demanding circumcision, were seeking to put the disciples under the Law of Moses, and were, as Peter said, putting “a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear.” (Acts 15:10). And Paul wrote: “I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing” (Gal. 5:2). This was a desperately important matter: important for us as well as for them: and the church in Antioch decided to send Paul and Barnabas, with some others, to Jerusalem unto the Apostles and elders about this question. At that time the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem plainly stated that the Gentile disciples were not to be put under the Law of Moses, and were not to be circumcised: that “yoke” was not to be put upon their necks.

But those “evil workmen” who so troubled the Christians in Antioch never wearied of their evil work; and wherever Paul preached the glad tidings of salvation through Christ alone, without the deeds of the law, these “dogs” followed, and tried to “remove” the disciples from “the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another” (Gal. 1:6-7). Almost the whole of the Epistle to the Galatians is written to expose the folly and wickedness of these evil workmen. Hear the Apostle cry, “Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth?” (Gal. 3:1). And notice well the solemn curse, twice repeated, on such teachers, in Gal. 1:8-9. But it was not to Galatia alone these “dogs” found their way, but also to Corinth, and most of the latter part of Second Corinthians is taken up exposing them there. Listen: “Such are false apostles, deceitful workmen, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.” (2 Cor. 11:13-15). “False apostles” is the name the true Apostle calls them: “deceitful workmen,” and “ministers of Satan.” Such in the sight of God are teachers who seek to put the saints of God under law.

And the descendants of these evil workmen are just as active today as they were in Paul’s day: so we do well to give good heed to the Apostle’s warning. When I was a child we had a neighbor who kept some fierce dogs; and he had a sign on his gate: “Beware of the dogs!” That is just what Paul is saying to us. The word translated “beware” is just the ordinary word for “look,” so we have translated it, “look out for the dogs!”

In Paul’s day the Jewish rabbis used to teach, “The nations of the world are like dogs.” Our Lord took up this saying to test the faith of the woman of Canaan in Matt. 15:22-28; but, in His infinite grace, He changed the word to “little dogs,” and this gave the woman the opportunity to point out that the “little dogs” got the crumbs under their master’s table, even though it was true in the East that the other dogs were kept outside. The Jews felt that they, and they only, were the people of God; and all else were unclean: were dogs! Now Paul takes up their saying,

and, as it were, says: “No, it is not the Gentile Christians who are the dogs. They are truly God’s people: it is you, yourselves, who are the dogs: you have rejected Christ, God’s Son, and so you cannot now be reckoned as God’s people: you are the unclean ones who are outside: you are the dogs!” And when we come to verse 8, we will see that Paul says that all these outward religious observances, such as circumcision, were only refuse, only fit to be thrown to the dogs.

In our ordinary English Bible it reads: “Beware of dogs.” But in the Greek New Testament there is the word “the”— “the dogs.... the evil workmen.... the concision.” The word “the” in Greek is generally like a finger pointing out something or someone. So it probably means that there were some special men who had come to Philippi, and were going, or trying to do, their evil work there, just as they had done in Antioch, Galatia, Corinth and other places.

In Acts 20:29 Paul foretold that “grievous wolves” should enter in among the saints, “not sparing the flock”. Wolves are even more fierce and cruel than “dogs.” When Paul wrote to the Philippians, the dogs were already there: but since then the wolves have come, and what havoc they have made of His flock His “beautiful flock”! (Jer. 13:20).

The Apostle goes on, “Look-out-for the evil workmen!” It may be either evil workmen, or workers. “Workmen” would turn our eyes to these evil men themselves; whereas “workers” might make us think more of their evil teaching, always preaching “works,” of which they were so proud, but which were so evil, as a means of salvation or holiness. It is exactly the same word that we saw in 2 Cor. 11, where the Apostle calls them “deceitful workers” (2 Cor. 11:13). O Beloved Saints of God, let us ever, ever remember that salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:9).

The third name that the Apostle calls them is “the concision.” This is a term of the utmost contempt. The Apostle is making a sort of pun on two Greek words: kata-tome (verse 2), and peri-tome (verse 3). You will notice each word has tome in it, but one begins with kata, and the other begins with peri. The first means literally, a “mutilation,” which was forbidden by the Law of Moses in Lev. 21:5; where this very Greek word is used. Paul compares their circumcision, of which they were so proud, just to being mutilated. The second word is the proper word for circumcision, which was the badge, or mark, of a true Jew. In Rom. 2:28-29, Paul wrote, “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28-29). It is very interesting to remember that Paul had almost certainly heard Stephen say much the same thing: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51). And perhaps as Saul of Tarsus listened to Stephen, he remembered that Jeremiah had said: “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah” (Jer. 4:4). And these “men of Judah” were already circumcised in their flesh, as Saul well knew. In Galatians we find the same thing: “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” (Gal. 5:6; See also 6:15). And in Gal. 3, you may see how plainly Paul shows that. “Ye (Gentile Christians) are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.... And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

All these things the Apostle tells the Philippian saints in three short sentences. And now he goes on to tell us the other side of the matter; in four short sentences: “For we, we are the circumcision, the ones worshipping by (the) Spirit of God, and exulting in Christ Jesus and not confiding in flesh.” As we have seen, the Scriptures plainly tell us that in the sight of God circumcision is a heart matter, not an outward thing: and so Paul can say: “For we, we are the circumcision.” Paul was a Jew, but the Philippian Christians were Gentiles: but circumcision in the flesh availeth nothing: so, no matter whether Jew or Gentile, “we are the circumcision—

In our ordinary English Bibles we read, “We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit” (vs. 3). But the way we have rendered it is almost certainly correct; and you will see that the New Translation by Mr. Darby renders it in almost the same way. You will recall that our Lord in John 4:24, said: “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” There is no way to worship God in spirit and in truth, except “by the Spirit of God” (2 Cor. 3:3). I fear that very much of what is called “worship” today is not by the Spirit of God; and is not in spirit and in truth. The very first necessity to worship by the Spirit of God is that we should be born again— “born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). They who are not born again, are still “in the flesh,” and “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). The contrast here is between external ceremonies, which these evil workers were pressing, and worship by the Spirit of God.

The word used here for worship is one which the Scriptures have taken to express the service of God, which was told forth in type by the priesthood of old. So here the Spirit of God claims that every true believer is “one worshipping by the Spirit of God.” That means that every true believer is a priest. And other Scriptures tell us the same thing, as for example, “Jesus Christ.... hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.” (Rev. 1:5-6. See also 1 Peter 2:9).

“And exulting in Christ Jesus.” The word translated “exult” means to glory, or to boast; but it carries in it the additional sense of joyful exultation. It is both different in form and of a weightier force, than the words usually translated to glory, or boast: it expresses rather the full utterance of victorious confidence, than merely gladness of heart. (See Pridham). It is one of Paul’s favorite words. He uses it almost sixty times in his Epistles, and elsewhere we only find it in Hebrews and James. He may have taken it from Jer. 9:24, which he quotes more than once. Beloved, may we exult more in Christ Jesus: may we enter more into His triumphs and victory!

The Judaizers could not sing this. We, who rest in Christ alone, without works, we are the only ones who can “exult in Christ Jesus.”

“And not confiding in flesh.” Every child of God must watch and fight against this snare. It was this that caused Simon Peter to deny his Lord, and this fleshly confidence comes naturally to “the flesh.”

But in this verse in Philippians 1 think the Spirit of God is speaking especially of fleshly piety, and empty forms, in place of Christ. Alas, far from being rare, such confidence in the flesh, in respect to the things of God, is the commonest thing today. May the Lord help us each one to say from the depths of our hearts: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal. 6:14).

I do not think that these “evil workers” were seeking to bring the Philippian saints to Jewish worship; but they were, I believe, seeking to mix Jewish worship with Christian worship: and that is exactly what we see on every hand today. The forms and ceremonies, the robes and vestments, the choirs and instrumental music, the noble church buildings and magnificent furnishings; everything, indeed, that is of an

outward form, rather than of spirit and of truth: as well as putting people under the Ten Commandments: these all are, I believe, in heart going back to Judaism; and partake of the work and teaching of these evil workmen.

If you were to say to people who use such things, that Christ alone is sufficient for salvation, and the Holy Spirit for worship, many would agree, but assure you that they only use these external things as a help to worship, and the Commandments as a rule of life. “We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully” (1 Tim. 1:8). But this is not a “lawful” use of the law: on the contrary, such people are “so foolish,” that having begun in the Spirit, they want to be made perfect by the flesh. (See Gal. 3:3). This is just what those evil workers tried to do at Antioch, Galatia, Corinth and Philippi. This is exactly what made the Apostle use such strong language— “dogs, evil workmen, the concision, false apostles, ministers of Satan.” It is of just such people the Apostle said of some at Ephesus, that they were “desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Tim. 1:7).

It is common to the heart of man the whole world over to suppose that righteousness and holiness come by works by keeping the law: but if you will read carefully the early chapters of Romans, you will see that the Scriptures teach the exact opposite. Listen: “Sin, getting a point of attack by the commandment, wrought in me every lust; for without law sin was dead.... And the commandment, which was for life, was found as to me, itself to be unto death: for sin, getting a point of attack by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.... O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. For what the law could not do, in that it was without strength1 through the flesh, God, having sent His own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit.” (Rom. 7:8 to Rom. 8:4 New Translation).

Perhaps before we stop, we should ask, “What does circumcision indicate in the mind of the Spirit?”

It was first given to Abraham in Gen. 17, “as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised.” (Rom. 4:11). Thus circumcision marked Abraham and his family off from all others in the world: it was a mark of separation. But it was a picture of death, so the Spirit of God says to us, those who are now the circumcision, “Mortify (or, put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleaness, etc.” (Col. 3:5). We are (or, should be) marked off from the world, not by an outward mark in the flesh: but because, having died with Christ, and having been raised with Him, we should walk in newness of life, in separation from evil, and possessing a righteousness, not of works, but by faith.

And have no confidence in the flesh.

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 30: Rejoice in the Lord

“(For) the rest, brothers mine, rejoice in (the) Lord. To-write the same-(things) to you (is) not irksome to me, but safe for-you. Look-out-for the dogs, look-out-for the evil-workmen, look-out-for the concision.”

Philippians 3:1-2

At first sight, chapter 3 might seem to be the beginning of an entirely fresh subject: with a break in the continuity of the Epistle. It might seem to jar on our spirits to turn from such an example of devotedness as Epaphroditus to those who must be termed, “dogs,” “evil workers,” “the concision.” But let us remember that devotedness has seemed to be the theme of our Epistle throughout; and we have, in chapter 2, gazed with joy and wonder at the examples of devotedness the Spirit of God has been pleased to bring before us; and now He is about (I believe) to bring before us the power for devotedness. Bearing this in mind, I trust we may see that there is no break in the continuity of the Epistle, even though it is true we are now to gaze on devotedness in a different aspect.

Our English Bible begins chapter 3, with: “Finally, my brethren” (vs. 1). This seems to intimate that Paul had in mind that he was about to close his letter. In chapter 4:8 we find the same word, and it has been suggested that again Paul thought to close, but once again found more to say. I do not think that such is the case. The literal translation of what Paul wrote is: “For the rest, my brethren” (vs. 1); or, as we may try to translate it: “(As to) that which remains (to be said), brothers mine.” Doubtless Paul knew his letter was drawing to a close, but he also knew that much more remained to be said. We find almost the same words, used in the same way, in 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:1; 2 Cor. 13:11; and Eph. 6:10; and I think in every case, the meaning is somewhat as we have suggested above. You will notice 1 Thess. 4:1 translates it, `furthermore’.

“Brothers mine,” or, “My brethren.” Paul does not often use this expression, though we find it twice in each of the three epistles— Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Philippians. (Eph. 6:10 should omit it). James is the one who uses it more often: but it is a very sweet and touching name, and seems to convey nearness and love in a special way: and perhaps that is why it is used in these particular epistles. In Romans the saints were mostly strangers, though some exceedingly well known and loved: and Paul would bind them to him with the words: “my brethren,” or “brothers mine.” In 1 Corinthians Paul had been compelled to do a lot of scolding. It was an epistle that was written through “many tears,” and “brothers mine,” seems peculiarly appropriate; for these naughty saints were very, very dear to the Apostle. But in Philippians it is altogether different. It was their warm-hearted love and fellowship in the gospel that drew out the affections of the Apostle’s heart, as perhaps in no other epistle to the churches, and caused him to exclaim, “brothers mine!”

And now we come to the particular word, that seems to me to link all together in such a beautiful way, so that we may see the entire coherence and wonderful harmony in the structure of the whole Epistle: “Rejoice in the Lord” (vs. 1). The keynote of the Epistle has been joy: “With joy he made supplication for them all (chap. 1:4). It was with joy, and ever new joy, that he beheld his very bonds giving a fresh impulse to the preaching of Christ (chap. 1:18). So too he is assured of his continuance with them all for their progress and joy of faith, that their boasting might abound in Christ through him (chap. 1:25). Next he called on them to fulfill his joy (chap. 2:2), not merely by the proof of their love to him, but by cultivating unity of mind and mutual love according to Christ, Who, though the highest, made Himself the lowest in grace, and is now exalted to the pinnacle of glory. `Yea, and if I be offered (or, poured forth) on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me’ (chap. 2:17, 18). So again, the Apostle sends away his companion and solace, Epaphroditus, when recovered, to the Philippians, who were uneasy at the tidings of his dangerous sickness, ‘that when ye see

him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.' (chap. 2:28)." (W. Kelly).

Thus we see joy like a cord of gold, running through the first two chapters of our lovely little book: and in like manner we will still find it in the last two chapters. So it is fitting that "rejoice" shall be the link that so strongly and so beautifully binds the whole Epistle together. "Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary" (Psa. 96:6).

So far we have seen joy amidst circumstances: often difficult circumstances: but now we come to joy that is independent of circumstances: "Rejoice in the Lord" (vs. 1). In Rom. 5:1-11 we have an accumulating multitude of blessings: one added after another: so we find the words, "also," "not only so," "much more," as one blessing after another is heaped before us: but in verse 11 we come to the crowning blessing of all: "Not only so, but we joy in God" (Rom. 5:11). It is true the correct translation is to exult, or boast: but it is a "joyous exultation." (Abbott-Smith). Well do I remember dear old Mr. Potter, in a conference at Des Moines, remarking: "We cannot get beyond that." There is no "not only so" to follow "joy in God." That joyous exultation is beyond and above circumstances entirely. It is "in God," where the storms of earth can never touch it. And so our chapter begins: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (vs. 1). In a sense that sums up all the Apostle has to say: and as long as the saints are rejoicing in the Lord, they are safe. In Chapter 4:4, the Apostle writes even more strongly: "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice!" (ch. 4:4). Some people seem to think to be a Christian is a sad thing, with all joy taken away. It is quite the reverse. A Christian who is walking with the Lord is filled with joy: yes, he may even be sorrowful, "yet always rejoicing." This joy is not the light and "frothy" joy of this world. It is a joy that accords with the Greek word "semnos," a word that is almost impossible to translate into English: the dictionary gives the meaning as: "grave, serious." But the "semnos" man "has a grace and dignity not lent him from earth; but which he owes to that higher citizenship which is also his." (Trench). And so only four verses after Philippians 4:4, (referred to above), we find the Spirit telling us to think on things that are semnos. (Translated honest in our English Bible). Our Lord Jesus said: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11). It is our Lord's own joy with which we rejoice, even now, down here.

We suggested that the third chapter of Philippians gives us the power of devotedness. If this suggestion is correct, could there be anything more suitable, or more beautiful, than the way in which it begins: "Rejoice in the Lord!" (vs. 1). We know that "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). And so here, in four words, the Spirit of God gives us the key to the power for devotedness to Christ. He, Himself, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame: and we, as we rejoice in Him, will find strength and power to walk the path before us, no matter what it may be, in devotedness to our Lord and Master.

Well may the Apostle say, "To write these things to you is not irksome to me, but safe for you." Joy is the second of the fruits of the Spirit, and one who is led by the Spirit, will never find it irksome to speak of that joy. Out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks; and if our hearts are flooded with the joy of the Lord, it must be manifested in our speech: yea, our very faces will be irradiated by it. "They looked unto Him, and were radiant." (Psa. 34:5) No, it was no trouble to the Apostle, to write "Rejoice in the Lord!" (vs. 1). "But for you (it is) safe," he adds. And, as we have said, in a sense this sums up what the Apostle has to say: for just as long as the saints are rejoicing in the Lord, they have His strength, and "are safe." It has been said that discouragement is the devil's strongest weapon: and there may be truth in this, for when we are discouraged we are not rejoicing in the Lord: for He is the God of all encouragement: and so when we cease to rejoice in the Lord, our strength is gone: and we are an easy prey for the enemy. Well the Apostle knows this, and well does he know how easy it is for us to get our eyes elsewhere than "looking off unto Jesus," and then our joy is gone, and with it our strength. So the next portion of our chapter is a warning against those things which so easily rob us of our joy in the Lord. We will close this lovely portion by once again repeating

"FINALLY, MY BRETHREN, REJOICE IN THE LORD!" (vs. 1).

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 28: A Child to a Father

"But the proof of him (Timothy) ye-know, that as child to (a) father, he-has-slaved with me for the glad-tidings. This-one, therefore, on-the-one hand, I-am-hoping to-send immediately, as-soonas I-may-see the-(things) relating-to me. On-the other-hand, I am persuaded in (the) Lord, that I also myself shall-come speedily."

Philippians 2:22-24

While meditating on the Scripture now before us I had a letter from a brother dearly beloved, telling how his son, an only and beloved son, still quite young, had preached the gospel with his father in the open air. As I read of the joy this had been to the father's heart, and his gratitude to God for such a privilege, I better understood the words: "As a child to a father, he has slaved with me for the gospel." And perhaps only one who has experienced this joy can fully enter into the Apostle's thoughts in this verse.

In the first sentence quoted, the construction of the Greek sentence is broken; and some think the Apostle meant to say, when he began this sentence: "that, as a child serves a father, so he served me in the gospel." But after the first two or three words, he felt this was placing Timothy in an inferior position, and "with that beautiful courtesy which is characteristic of him," he avoids this, "and inserts 'with' before `me,' breaking the construction, but with admirable effect." (Vaughan).

You may remember the Epistle began: "Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 1:1). The word generally translated "serve" in the first paragraph of verse 22 is the verb, "to slave," formed from the noun "slave" found in the first verse of our Epistle. For this reason we have translated it: "he has slaved with me for the gospel." At the beginning of the Epistle, Paul and Timothy are presented to us as fellow-slaves of the same Master: so it would not do to suggest that Timothy "slaved for Paul." (And yet let us ever remember that Gal. 5:13 says: "By love slave for one another.") But in our portion, Paul adds the little word "with" before "me," so again he makes Timothy his fellow-slave. Paul was no hireling, nor was Timothy: they both were slaves. Neither one was his own, for each had been bought with a price: and they delighted to confess that they belonged absolutely and altogether to the Lord that bought them.

I fear, my beloved Brethren and Sisters, that there are few of us today who have entered into what this means. Can you, dear Reader, honestly, and truly, before God, say: "I am a slave of Christ Jesus"? HIS, and HIS alone, to go where HE sends, wherever that may be: HIS, and HIS alone, to do what HE wants, however menial and humiliating that may be? I venture to suggest that the laborers in the vast harvest fields

would not be so pitifully few, were there more servants of the Lord today who not only understood, but acted in obedience to the truth that we are “slaves of Christ Jesus”; and who were willing to “slave for the gospel.” These solemn truths we have been meditating upon in Philippians should be enough to arouse us from the self-complacency and self-satisfaction that seems to have settled down on so many of us.

The Philippian saints had known Timothy of old, and they knew there was no self-complacency or self-satisfaction with him: they knew the proof of him, they knew his character: it was not really needful for Paul to speak thus, but he delights to remind them of this one young man, with whom he had no man likemined: one who sought the things of Christ Jesus, in a day when he must say, all seek their own. How different was Timothy— the “slave of Christ Jesus.” Oh, that the Spirit of God might be able to record these four words of you and of me!

Verse 24. “This one,” emphatic— “This one, therefore, on the one hand, I am hoping to send immediately, as soon as I may see the things relating to me.” The emphasis on “This one,” carries with it still further praise and commendation of Timothy. I sometimes wonder (with joy) at the way the Spirit of my God so delights to commend the people of God, when He can do so: and I sometimes wonder (with sorrow) at the way we seem so ready to see the faults and failings in each other, rather than the good and faithful qualities that their Lord sees: and so we are more ready to blame than praise.

We must notice the difference between the “things of Christ Jesus,” (vs. 21), and the “things that relate to me.” (verse 23). “To the true disciple, in his true condition, the things of Christ Jesus are, as such, the supreme interest.” But the things relating to Paul are also of interest to Paul, and to those who loved him: nor do they in any way detract from wholehearted devotedness as to things of Christ Jesus.

So may we learn to view in their proper aspect HIS things, and the things that relate to us.

“On the one hand,” (Acts 21:40) Paul hoped to send “this one,”—Timothy—to be with his dear Philippian brethren, but “on the other hand he is “persuaded in the Lord,” (once again we meet this lovely expression), “that I also myself shall come speedily.” We have no record as to whether this “persuasion” was fulfilled or not: it is one of those things the Lord has seen fit to leave untold: but it will not be long now till we meet these dear saints above: and if it is seemly and right, answers, will be given to many of these questions that are hidden from us now.

I have no one like-minded who wilt care with genuine feeling how ye get on. For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:20-21 (J.N.D.)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 27: All Seek Their Own

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likemined, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.”

“But I-hope in (the) Lord Jesus soon to-send Timothy to-you, in-order-that I-also may-be-cheered-in-soul knowing the-(things) concerning you. For I-have no-one equal-in-soul who will genuinely care-about the-(things) concerning you; for they all seek their own-(things), not the-(things) of-Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 2:19-21

“But I-hope in (the) Lord Jesus soon to send Timothy to you, in order that I also may be cheered-in-soul knowing the things concerning you. For I have no one equal-in-soul who will genuinely care about the things concerning you; for they all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.”1

We have mentioned that the second chapter of Philippians presents to us example of devotedness: first and foremost, alone, we gaze on our Lord Jesus. Then we saw Paul, as the wine poured out on the sacrifice for a drink-offering, and then also the Philippian saints themselves, as the sacrifice.

Now we will meditate a little, God willing, on Paul’s own son in the faith, Timothy: and before we reach the end of the chapter, we will see Epaphroditus as another beautiful example of devotedness to Christ.

Let us refresh our memories a little as to Timothy, and I hope we will find it also refreshes our own souls. His home was in either Derbe or Lystra, probably Lystra; his mother was a Jewess who believed, named Eunice, and unfeigned faith dwelt not only in her, but also, first, in his grandmother Lois: but his father was a Greek, and as he had never been circumcised, he may have been brought up as a Greek. However, he knew the Holy Scriptures from earliest childhood, and was well reported of by the brethren that dwelt in Lystra and Iconium: and on Paul’s second missionary journey, he desired to have Timothy go forth with him in the work. (Acts 16:1-3 & 2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy fully knew what persecutions Paul endured at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra. (2 Tim. 3:10-11). Most of these persecutions had been on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 14), when Timothy was, perhaps, only a boy; but he knew all about them, and may have been an eye-witness of some. It was at Lystra Paul was stoned, and dragged out of the city, supposed to be dead: and it is very probable the boy Timothy was amongst the disciples who “stood round about him,” (Acts 14:20) when he “rose up, and came into the city.” He must have known also how John Mark had turned back from the very path of service to which he was now called: yet he did not hesitate to follow Paul, though well he must have known it would be to share similar persecutions. I rather wonder how many of us would have done the same thing.

I think Timothy is a most encouraging example for young believers today. He was young, not strong in body, probably knew what it was to be despised. He seems to have been by nature, timid; and at times in much need of encouragement. He knew what tears meant. He knew the temptation to be a coward. (2 Tim. 1:7; New Translation). But I know of no fellowservant whom Paul so delights to honor:

listen to what he says of him—

“Timothy, my dearly beloved son” (2 Tim. 1:2).

“Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17).

“Timotheus…worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do. Let no man therefore despise him” (1 Cor. 16:10-11).

“Timotheus my fellow worker.” (Rom. 16:21).

Timothy was almost certainly with Paul in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Troas, Miletus, and doubtless other places; and he was with him in prison at Rome: and it was for Timothy Paul specially longed in his last imprisonment, probably in a dungeon, just before his death. We do not know if he reached him in time, or not.

This young brother was associated with Paul in writing six epistles; and his name is included in the salutation of a seventh; and we have two letters that were written by the Apostle to him. Paul sent him for special service to Thessalonica, to Corinth, to Philippi. We know he had been in prison for Christ’s sake, and had been released. (Heb. 13:23). Paul had a number of companions and helpers, but this young man, weak in body, but strong in spirit, seems to have been the dearest to him, and the most trusted. It is this young man Paul chose to go to the assembly in Philippi, while he himself is unable to be with them. We never read, as far as I know, of any very great gift that Timothy had: though he did unquestionably have special gifts: (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6): but, as another has said, “It is not great talents, nor great scholarship, nor great preachers that God needs, but men and women great in holiness, great in faith, great in love, great in fidelity, great for God.” O, my beloved young readers, may you take courage by Timothy to seek to be men and women such as this!

And so we read: “But I hope in the Lord Jesus soon to send Timothy to you.” I think the word “But” takes us back to the 12th verse, where Paul speaks of his own absence: and to make up in a way for this, “this favorite companion, the Apostle will now send to his favorite church”; with the added assurance, “I am persuaded (or, confident) in the Lord, that I also myself shall come soon.”

There is something very lovely in the way Paul tells his beloved friends of his “hope” to send Timothy, and of his “confidence” that he himself would soon come. Both are “in the Lord,” or “in the Lord Jesus,” (vs. 19) and James tells us we should say, “If the Lord will: and Paul uses these words at times: (1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7): but Paul hopes, or is confident, in the Lord. There may be a difference between this, and being “in Christ,” which would take us up to our union with Christ in heaven: while the expression “in the Lord” would seen to think of us as His bondslave down here: but both are in Him. None knew as Paul that “we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30); and it cannot fail to affect his ordinary speech. His every thought and word and deed seem to proceed from Christ: in very truth he could say “For me to live is Christ” (ch. 1:21). Thus he could speak of—

Love “in the Lord” Rom. 16:8.

Boast “in the Lord” 2 Cor. 10:17.

Labor “in the Lord” 1 Cor. 15:58.

Salute “in the Lord” 1 Cor. 16:19.

Testify “in the Lord” Eph. 4:17.

Be strong “in the Lord” Eph. 6:10.

Receive one “in the Lord” Phil. 2:29.

Hope “in the Lord” Phil. 2:19.

Stand fast “in the Lord” Phil. 4:1.

Be of the same mind “in the Lord” Phil. 4:2.

Rejoice “in the Lord” Phil. 3:1;4:4.

We are now brothers “in the Lord” Philem. 1:16.

And let us never forget, we are to marry, “only in the Lord”. 1 Cor. 7:39.

This does not exhaust them, but time would fail to recount all. And may I again point out that the word LORD necessarily implies a counterpart, slave, just as husband necessarily implies wife, or father necessitates a child. And I sadly fear, Beloved, in our day we are in danger of forgetting that HE is our LORD, and that we are HIS slaves. Paul’s Epistles open with these words: “Paul, slave of Christ Jesus.” (Rom. 1:1)

Because He bought me, I am His slave. May that ever be the breathing of our heart, as it was of Paul’s heart!

And why did Paul wish to send Timothy? That he himself might be “cheered-in-soul,” knowing the “things concerning” the saints in Philippi. The word we have translated “cheered-in-soul” is a very rare word: it only occurs here in the Greek Scriptures, and is thought not to occurs at all in the Greek Classics, though words from the same root are found, and it is found in the old letters, etc., that we have mentioned, and on inscriptions. It has been translated in many ways: “good comfort, good courage, good cheer, take heart, refreshed, etc.” In the next verse (verse 20) we get a similar word, that is even more uncommon, which we have translated “equal-in-soul.” Paul loves to play on Greek words, and probably intended these two words to be linked together. It is remarkable that in verse 2 of this chapter, we get a third very rare word that is also found only here in the Greek New Testament, and also belongs to the same group as the two words we have just been looking at. In our ordinary English Bibles it is translated “of one accord”: Dr. Lightfoot tells us it means “a complete harmony of feelings and affections”; Dr. Vaughan translates it “knit together in soul,” though he adds, this is not “wholly satisfactory”; Mr. Darby uses “joined in soul.” The three words all are derived from “psuche” soul:

sun-psuchoi- “ones-knit-together-in-soul”

eu-psucheo- “to-be-cheered-in-soul”

iso-psuchon- “to-be-equal-in-soul”

To these we may add, from 2 Tim. 1:16:

ana-psucho to refresh: perhaps the meaning is, “to-renew-the-soul”

These are all very rare words, each used only once in the Greek New Testament. Is it that such qualities are so rare in the saints, that the Spirit of God must use such rare words to describe them?

God speaks of Himself as the “God of all encouragement” (2 Cor. 1:3 New Translation), and the Greek language seems to be much more full of words to encourage us than English. I have pondered for weeks how to translate this word, eu-psucho, so as to give its own distinctive meaning, and to try and differentiate it from other words with the meaning to encourage: and more than a dozen different Greek words that are meant to cheer our hearts come to mind: each with its own special meaning, so hard to tell out in English: and I suppose, were one to seek, others might be found. The God of all encouragement means to encourage our hearts with these words, and I would love to try and tell you how they have cheered my own heart, but you are probably already weary with Greek words, so I refrain. But the opening words in an old Greek Grammar will come to mind: “That a knowledge of the New Testament in its original tongue is a thing to be desired by intelligent Christians none will question.” Was the old writer mistaken, or are “intelligent Christians” sadly few today?

But let us return to Philippians. Paul knew his dear Philippian brethren well enough to know that “the things concerning” (Acts 19:8) them would cheer his soul. He could not write such words to the saints in Galatia or Corinth: I wonder could he write them to the saints in the place where you live, and I? Could he write them to me? Even in Paul’s day there do not seem to have been many individuals who could so cheer the Apostle’s soul: but Timothy was one such, and of him Paul writes: “I have no man equal-in-soul, who will genuinely care about the things concerning you; for they all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus.” (The word translated “things” could equally well be translated “interests”).

Dear young believer, (and old believer, too), do not these words challenge your heart? Honestly, before God, whose “things” are you seeking? Whose interests? Whose comfort? Whose pleasure? Whose ease? Whose profit? To me, the words are most challenging. Would to God they would challenge every one who reads them! Perhaps these words explain why so few young people are to be found in the dark and needy parts of the Lord’s harvest field.

While meditating on verse 4 of this chapter, we mentioned that Mr. W. Kelly translates 2 Cor. 5:18, thus: “While we have the eye, not on the things that are seen, but on those not seen, for the things seen (are) temporary, but those not seen, eternal.” I believe this is an excellent translation. It is not, as we saw, the ordinary word for look, or see: but comes from a word meaning “a mark on which to fix the eye.” We get this very word in the 14th verse of the next chapter of Philippians: “I press toward the mark” (ch. 3:14). It is a race, in which the runner has his eye fixed on the goal. Is not this what you and I need in these days of laxity, when our eye is tempted to wander to all sorts of things, and when it is more awfully true than ever: “All seek their own” (vs. 21)? May God help us each one to have our eye on those things above, “the things of Jesus Christ,” and not on the things all around us, that so easily fill our vision: then we will be found seeking the things of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps someone will ask, “Does this Scripture really mean that there was not one other, except Timothy, in those days, who sought not his own things, but the things of Jesus Christ?” God forbid that one should for a moment detract from the terrible force of this Scripture, but it is fair to say that in the Greek New Testament there is the little word hoi (the nominative plural definite article) before the word all. It is said that according to Greek Grammar this imposes some sort of limitation on the word all. Mr. W. Kelly and Dr. Vaughan translate this: “They all seek their own.” This, I think, is as nearly correct as can be in English. We do not know, nor need we ask, who the “they” refers to: possibly the Philippian saints would know: but it seems to make clear that such beloved servants of the Lord as Luke and Peter and John, and other names known to the Lord, did seek the things of Jesus Christ, and not their own things. And this should encourage us each, individually, to seek to make sure we are not found amongst the “they all,” of this verse, “who seek their own things, and not the things of Jesus Christ.” I believe there always has been, and I believe there always will be, a remnant, however small and feeble, who do seek the things of Jesus Christ. May God help us to be of it at any cost!

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 26: I Have Not Run in Vain

“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service, of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause do ye also joy, and rejoice with me.”

“ … holding out (the) Word of-Life; unto a boast for-me in Christ’s day, that not in vain Iran, neither in vain I-toiled. But even if I-am-being poured-out (as a drink offering) upon the sacrifice and ministry of-your faith, I-rejoice, and rejoice in-common-with you all. But in-like-manner also do-ye-rejoice, and rejoice-in-common-with me.”

Philippians 2:16-18

We have seen in verses 14 to 16, seven steps for the Christian through this dark world: but as we pondered these steps we were overwhelmed with the reality of the fact that none has ever trodden them truly, except our own beloved Lord and Master. Yet, as Mr. Kelly beautifully puts it: “Let us not forget how the apostle’s picture of the saint resembles the Master.” And thus Paul exhorts the Philippian saints to tread these steps, “so as to be a boast for me in Christ’s day, that not in vain I ran, neither in vain I toiled.” And let us remember that such is the only sanctioned path for all saints. Let us not excuse ourselves with the thought that our path in these last difficult days is harder than the path the saints of old had to tread. Some of them were “saints.... of Caesar’s household” (ch. 4:22).

And to walk with God is the secret of treading the pathway marked out in Philippians 2:14-16. It is not the special right of some advanced souls only to walk that pathway. It is what every Christian desires. In chapter 1:10, the Apostle prayed that “Ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ”: just as though it was possible for them to walk that path of faith “till the day of Christ” (ch. 1:10) without a

single false step. We marvel at the thought, but Paul's marvel, perhaps, would have been that we should count it wonderful.

Often and often Paul's thoughts were looking forward to the day of Christ:

"Blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8).

"That the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).

"Ye also are our's (our boast) in the day of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. 1:14).

"He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (ch. 1:6).

"Sincere and without offense till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:10).

And what is this "day" of which the Apostle so often speaks? This "day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8)? or, "day of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. 1:14)? or, "day of Christ"? In 2 Peter 1:19 it is just called "the day": "until the day dawn" (2 Peter 1:19). In 1 Cor. 4:3 we read of "man's day." (See the margin). We speak of "Caesar's day" or, "Napoleon's day"; and we all understand by this that it means the day when Caesar or Napoleon held sway, and exercised his will. So is it now: it is "man's day," when man is permitted to act according to his own will. But the time is coming when the Lord Jesus Christ will have His day: when He will come again and take all His own to be with Himself forever, as we read in 1 Thess. 4. That is the beginning of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ: but it will include the judgment seat of Christ, of which we read in 2 Cor. 5:10, and other Scriptures: and I think this is the time that the Apostle refers to in our verse in Philippians 2. When he sees his beloved brethren from Philippi receive their reward for their faithful walk down here, it will be a boast to Paul, that not in vain he ran, and not in vain he toiled. And, beloved fellow laborer, you and I have that same bright hope: nor do I mean by that word "fellow laborer" any special class of persons. A child who seeks to lead a school-mate to the Savior; the Sunday School teacher who seeks to win the class to Him; the workman who points his companion to Christ: and, perhaps the sweetest of all, the parents who win their own child: these all are "laborers" for Christ: these all may look forward to that same boast the apostle had: if these dear souls continue in the path marked out.

In 2 Thess. 2:2 we read of "the day of Christ". If you will look at the New Translation, or any good modern translation, you will see this should be "the day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:2): for it speaks of a different time, and "the day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:2) is very different from "the day of Christ" (vs. 16). That is the day when Christ will take His place as Judge, and this poor wicked world must be judged before Him. We often read of it in the Old Testament, as well as the New: and a terrible time it will be. It "is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel 2:11).

In Rev. 1:10, we read: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." This refers to the first day of the week. This is a different expression in the Greek, to that translated "the day of the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:2). Perhaps more literally it might be rendered, "the Lordly day." We have the same word in 1 Cor. 11:20, "the Lord's supper." These are the only places this word is used in the New Testament. When we realize that "Sunday," means the day they worshipped the sun: just as Monday is the day they worshipped the moon; we Christians will do well to use instead the name which the Lord Himself has chosen for His day.

But let us go back to our verse. The Apostle's thoughts were looking forward to Christ's day, when He would have come for His own, to take them to be forever with Himself; when He would review their pathway down here, and to some He would say: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:23). If the Lord thus commended the beloved Philippian saints it would be a boast for Paul: for he had been the instrument used of the Lord to win them. In chapter 4:1, Paul writes to them: "My brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown" (ch. 4:1).

In writing to the Thessalonian saints he speaks similarly: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of boasting? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." The word for "coming" in this verse is parousia; a word that I suppose is impossible to translate. In a note to chapter 24, we tried to make clear the meaning of this word. It not only tells of the coming of a person to a place, but also of his presence in that place after he has arrived. "Christ's day" tells us the same, but put in a different way.

In that coming day of review and rewards, the Philippian saints would be Paul's boast "that not in vain I ran, neither in vain I toiled." And at the same time the Thessalonian saints would be to him his hope, and joy, and "crown of boasting" (1 Thess. 2:19). And these dear Philippian saints: his "joy and crown." And the Scripture says that "then shall every man have praise of God," (1 Cor. 4:5) so be of good cheer, dear Brother, dear Sister, you who have sought to serve the Lord down here, you will find that not in vain you ran, neither in vain you toiled.

The word ran tells us that Paul is looking at himself as a runner in the marathon foot race: (one of his favorite similes): and the commendation of the Philippian saints, told out that he ran not in vain: literally, "ran not to emptiness." How many who run in a race return with empty hands, and uncrowned brow, no prize for them: they run unto emptiness: they run in vain.

"Neither in vain I toiled." There are various words for "labor" in Greek: one gives prominence to the hardship: another to the painful effort. The word used here tells of the fatigue and the weariness: it is from the same root as the word "In weariness and painfulness" (2 Cor. 11:27). I do not think the Apostle is casting a doubt on the fruit of his labors in this verse: for you recall he says elsewhere: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58). We find just the same words here as in Philippians 2:16. Let us ever remember that not unto emptiness we toil.

"Nay, if I am even being poured out as a drink-offering upon the sacrifice and ministry of your faith, I rejoice, and rejoice in common with you all. But do ye in like manner also rejoice, and rejoice in common with me." (Phil. 2:17-18).

It has been said that the second chapter of Philippians gives us "examples of devotedness." We have in this chapter already gazed with adoring wonder at our Savior as the pre-eminent example of devotedness, even to death, and that the death of the cross. Now we are to gaze on some of His followers, who have sought in some measure to walk in that pathway. The first example the Spirit of God brings before us is the Apostle himself. "Even if I am being poured out as a drink-offering." It is not: "If I should be poured out," but "if I am being poured out." It is the very same tense as in 2 Tim. 4:6, but there is added the little word, "already": and no "if": "I am already being poured out" (2 Tim. 4:6). Those words were penned not long before he laid down his life for his Lord.

The law of Moses required that a certain amount of wine should in most cases accompany the sacrifices. See, for example, the morning and evening sacrifice, Ex. 29:40-41; the sacrifices at the Feasts of Jehovah: Lev. 23:13,18, etc. First, no doubt, this tells us of our Lord Jesus Christ: “He hath poured out His soul unto death” (Isa. 53:12). But in our chapter in Philippians we find Paul using the figure of himself. We have seen him running, we have seen him toiling: now we see him laying down his life: pouring out his life, on the sacrifice.

And what was the sacrifice? It was “the sacrifice and ministry of your faith.” I suppose it included the Philippian saints themselves. Their “faith,” their confidence in their Lord, led them to present themselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which was their reasonable service. And the dear Apostle rejoices to be the drink-offering, being poured out on their sacrifice, and he beseeches them to rejoice in common with him. There is something extremely beautiful in the way Paul associates himself with them. The sacrifice and the drink-offering belonged together: they formed one offering. We have seen how the Philippians struggled with him for the faith of the gospel; and we will see it again, as we read further in our Epistle: and so here we find, whether in life, or in death, Paul and his beloved brethren and sisters in Philippi were one. And notice he uses that little word “all” once more: he would not leave one out, not even Euodias or Syntyche, even though they were having a quarrel. And so in the Philippian saints we see another example of devotedness.

But there is another lovely trait in this verse. The main part of the sacrifice was the offering itself. In the morning and evening sacrifice, the main part was the lamb. The drink-offering was added to it, but was not the important part of the sacrifice. Paul represents the Philippian saints as the sacrifice: he was merely the drink-offering poured on it. Like his Master, he made himself of no reputation: he let this mind be in him, which was also in Christ Jesus. May you and I beloved, learn the lesson.

And as they were linked together in one offering: now he would have them and himself linked together in one joy: the joy of suffering for Christ’s sake. You remember in chapter 1:29 we read, “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” The suffering was a gift, given to them: now in chapter 2, face to face with death, “being poured out,” (2 Tim. 4:6) how does the Apostle face it? Four times, in three lines, do we find the word “Rejoice!” Nor would he rejoice alone: but it must be they in common with him, and he in common with them. It is the very same spirit of the “with you,” in 2 Cor. 4:14. Paul can enjoy nothing alone.

In Rom. 15:16 we find the same thought of the saints being a sacrifice offered to God, acceptable, “being sanctified by the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15:16).

(Some have thought Paul here refers to pagan sacrifices, because Josephus says the wine was not poured on the Jewish sacrifices, but around them: but there is no ground for this thought. The Greek Old Testament in Num. 15:5, uses exactly the same preposition, “upon,” for the drink-offering upon the burnt-offering, as the Spirit of God uses in Philippians 2:17.)

(For Chapter 27)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 25: Results of Cultivating

“Do all-(things) without murmurings and (without) disputings, that ye-may-be unblameable and uncorrupted, children of-God unblemished, amidst (a) crooked and distorted race, amongst whom ye-appear as luminaries in (the) world, holding-out (the) word of-life.”

Philippians 2:14-16

We have meditated a little on Philippians 2:12-13, considering chiefly the words, “work out your own salvation,” (vs. 12) as they are translated in our Authorized Version: but we saw that another translation might be: “cultivate your own salvation.” It might be of interest to look at a few other passages where this Greek word might be translated in the same way:

“The law cultivates wrath” (Rom. 4:15).

“Tribulation cultivates patience” (Rom. 5:3).

“Godly sorrow cultivates repentance” (2 Cor. 7:10).

“The trying of your faith cultivates patience” (James 1:3).

Another important point in this verse is the use Scripture makes of the word “salvation.” If we think of the salvation of our souls only, many passages of Scripture will be very hard to understand: for that salvation was completed at the cross, and was given to us freely when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. We could not “work out,” or even “cultivate” this salvation: for it is complete and perfect forever: our souls are as safe now as they will be when we are at home in the Glory. But Scripture looks at salvation in various ways: as we have already seen, it speaks of the salvation of our bodies as well as of our souls: it looks at salvation as past, present, or future: according as redemption, grace, or glory are in view. For our souls, salvation is past: (See 1 Peter 1:9; Eph. 2:5, 8; 1 Cor. 15:2). But for our bodies, the Lord keeps us safe day by day, and hour by hour, and this will not be completed until He has us safe at Home, spirit, soul, and body: as we see in Rom. 5:9,10: “Much more, being reconciled, we shall be kept safe in His life.” (Moule). This is present salvation; and in Rom. 8:23-24 we may see future salvation: “Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:23-24). And see also Rom. 13:11. This salvation is “the deliverance that crowns the close of all the difficulties we may encounter in the passage through the desert-world, as well as.... the present guardian care of our God who brings us safely through. It is a salvation only completed at the appearing of Jesus.” (W.K.)

We also spoke a little of the tremendously important fact that it is GOD which worketh in you. In the Authorized Version it adds, “both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (vs. 13). But in the Greek New Testament the words translated “worketh” and “to do,” are the same. But it is quite a different word in verse 12, that has been translated “work out.” So I think it is, perhaps, clearer if we translate as we did in our last chapter: “Cultivate your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is the (One) working in you both the willing and the working for the sake of His good pleasure.” The word here translated “working,” means the “internal operation of power, though seen in results.” (J.N.D.). In verses 14 to 16 we will see the results: but let us never forget that it is GOD, not us, Who works out these results in us. Perhaps all my readers

know in their intellect that the Holy Spirit dwells in every believer. (John 14:17; 1 Cor. 6:19, etc.); but do we not often seem to forget that He actually is in us? Do we not often seek to do the work ourselves? And is not this the reason we so often fail? You remember in Gal. 2:20, we read: “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” As we are about to ponder the “results” we have just spoken of, we would be utterly hopeless and discouraged if we had to trust our own efforts to produce them: but let us never, never forget that “It is GOD which worketh in you” (vs. 13). It may seem strange to think that GOD must work even “the willing.” We are slow to believe that we are so bad by nature that we are not even willing, of ourselves, to produce these results. It must be GOD who works the willing, as well as the working. And both the willing and the working are for the sake of His good pleasure. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 5:9: “We are ambitious.... to be well-pleasing to Him.” (Literal translation). But God must work even this ambition in us.

Now let us seek to go on to verses 14 to 16: “Do all things without murmurings and (without) disputings, that ye may be unblameable and uncorrupted, children of God unblemished, amidst a crooked and distorted race, amongst whom ye appear as luminaries in (the) world, holding out (or, offering) (the) word of life.”

But let us arrange the first part of this Scripture in a slightly different way: to try and bring out more clearly the force which I think the Holy Spirit has for us in it.

We will find that the Spirit of God here lists seven results of His work in us: and you will remember that seven is the number of completeness, or perfection. These seven may be divided into three sections or classes,

1. Do all things without murmurings

2. and (without) disputings, that ye may be

3. unblameable

4. and uncorrupted, children of God

5. unblemished amidst a crooked and distorted race,

6. amongst whom ye appear as luminaries in (the world),

7. holding out (or, offering) (the) word of life.

The first two are linked together very closely: very strong negatives. The three that follow are linked together in the Greek Testament because there each begins with “a,” which I have attempted to translate (very feebly) by using three words that each begin with “un.” The “a” of the Greek is a negative in somewhat the same manner as “un” is a negative in English. The last two are very strong positives. So we may see there is a progression from a strong negative to a strong positive. And I doubt not this is as it should be in the Christian life.

The first word we must look at is “murmuring.” It is the translation of a Greek word pronounced something like, “gongusmos,” and you can almost hear the grumblings and mutterings, in the sound of the word. The children of Israel murmured very often. It was one of their chief sins. They murmured at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:11), though this word is not used of them there. They murmured at Marah (Ex. 15:24) where this word (with an added preposition) is used of them in the Greek Old Testament. We find it again in Ex. 16:2 in the wilderness of Sin; and again in Ex. 17:3 at Rephidim (where this work exactly is used). They murmured again at the return of the spies. (Num. 14:2, 27, 29, 36); and also against Aaron, (Num. 16:11). I think the particular word used in this verse in Philippians is used seven times in Exodus and Numbers.

The word translated “disputings,” is “dialogismos,” from which we get our word “dialog.” It begins with an inward questioning, that may be silent, and then these inward questionings become doubts. But when they grow bolder and are uttered, then they are disputings. You may see them well illustrated in Mark 2:6 & 8, where they are well translated “reasoning.” The Lord often had to meet this spirit. If you will ponder these two words, you will see they are the roots of a very large range of sins: most of which, perhaps, are due to a lack of real, simple, living, obedient faith. When we were children, how often our mother used to quote this verse in Philippians to us! But it is not the children only who need to hear this word: much as most of them may profit by taking heed to it.

The second group of results are in the words: a-memptos; a-keraios; and a-momos; all, you will note, begin with “a.” The first word of this group, amemptos, means “blameless.” There should be nothing in our lives of which anyone can take hold, and blame us. The Lord could say, “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” (John 8:46). Not one could. He was absolutely and altogether amemptos, unblameable. Not only must we learn not to murmur and dispute, but we must learn to walk blamelessly through this evil world.

Near where I live there is a dear Christian laborer: he labors in the rubber or coconut plantations: he comes from the island of Timor, and speaks no English, and I am sure has never heard of a-memptos: but he thoroughly understands the meaning of this passage in Philippians. He has spread the gospel wherever he works: and yesterday he told us, laughing, “I have to be the best laborer in the plantation, or my boss would never put up with me.” A Christian official for whom he once worked told us that he is the best laborer he ever had. He knows the meaning of amemptos, though he has never heard the word. May we be more like him!

The fourth word is a-keraios, which literally means “unmixed.” Wine unmixed with water is akeraios. It is sometimes translated guileless, innocent, simple, pure: I have translated it “uncorrupted” for the sake of using a word beginning with “un-,” to try and link these three words together, as the Holy Spirit has done in Greek. But I am not at all satisfied with this translation, without an explanation. It describes a man with unmixed motives. I think the best illustration I know is the man who would not wear a garment of woolen and linen. (Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:11). Abraham was such a man as this; but, alas, his nephew Lot often put on this kind of garment. Abraham, at times, failed to be an amemptos man, as, for example, when he went down to Egypt; but he always was an akeraios man. Amemptos relates to the judgment of others: akeraios describes the intrinsic character. (In this connection may I earnestly commend to my readers Mr. J. G. Bellet’s pamphlet, Woolen and Linen.)

The last word in this second series is a-momos. This is the word that is continually used in the Old Testament, and the New, for an unblemished sacrifice. We find it in Ex. 29:1, and often in Leviticus, and again in Numbers. In 1 Peter 1:19 we find it again: we are redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). I think “without blemish” here tells of His

inward perfection, and “without spot” of His outward perfection. But in Lev. 22:21-22, without blemish refers to outward blemishes. In Col. 1:21-22 we read: “You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblemished (amomos) and unreproveable in His sight.” Again, in Jude 24 we read of One who is “able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you unblemished (amomos) before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” I judge from these Scriptures that amomos describes the condition in the sight of God, as amemptos in the sight of man; and akeraios the intrinsic character. Those who know their own hearts best, know best how far in practice we now are from being amomos (unblemished): though as seen in Christ, even now God sees us unblemished. But we can thank Him that the object He has in view for us; the object toward which He is working in us, is that we should be in our daily life unblemished: and the day is surely coming when He will present us thus unblemished before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

But we must look a little more closely at verse 15, for it is of peculiar interest: “That ye may be unblameable and uncorrupted, children of God unblemished amidst a crooked and distorted race, amongst whom ye appear as luminaries in (the) world, holding out (or, offering) the word of life.”

Most of this verse is based on, but not quoted from, Deut. 32:5, in the Greek Old Testament. In Deut. 14:1, looking at Israel as God’s chosen and separated people, we read: “Ye are the children of the LORD your God”. But in Deut. 32:5, looking at their rebellious walk and ways, the Spirit of God says: “They have sinned, (they are) not children to him, (they are) blemished (momos: note, without the ‘a’), a crooked and distorted race.” Israel has ceased to be “children to Him,” and have, instead, become “a crooked and distorted race”; blemished, instead of unblemished. Now the saints at Philippi have God working in them so that they, once poor sinners of the Gentiles, have become “children of God,” (Gal. 3:26) and they are to be unblemished children, amidst the blemished, crooked, and distorted race: which described not only Israel, but the Gentiles also.

“Among whom ye appear as luminaries in (the) world.” Or, it might equally be translated, “Among whom appear ye as luminaries in (the) world.” The verb “appear” is used in the middle voice, and then is used for the rising, or appearing, of heavenly bodies. (J.N.D. Note in large New Testament). We find the same thing in Matt. 2:7, “the star that was appearing,” or, “the appearing star.” The word translated “lights” (phoster) in the Authorized Version is the word used of heavenly luminaries, and is only used on one other occasion in the New Testament: Rev. 21:11: “He carried me away in the spirit and showed me.... the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light (phoster) was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” To me, there is something inexpressibly beautiful in all this. The Christian is represented as a heavenly light, a new and beautiful star, perhaps; appearing amidst a crooked and distorted race: and the light that shines from this luminary is the light of heaven; but it appears in (the) world. There is no article— no “the”— in the Greek with the word “world”; this gives the sense in the whole world: it has the effect of emphasizing the greatness of the sphere in which the Christian is to shine. It is the universe of mankind, including those as yet outside the sound of the gospel. (Vaughan).

Even in earthly things men look for guidance to the stars. A man lost on the prairie may find his way home by the stars. In navigation, sailors look to the stars, especially to the North Star. In an important survey, we always run our base-lines by the stars, particularly the North Star: and so keep them from becoming crooked and distorted. Thus these `luminaries,’ these ‘heavenly lights’ in this dark world, need to remember that those who walk in darkness have their eyes upon them: but just as other stars point to the North Star, let us ever have our eye fixed on ‘The Bright and Morning Star,’ and then our path will not be crooked, and we shall not lead astray those watching us. It was a star which led the wise men to the Savior at Bethlehem when He was a Babe. How good if we too can be like that!

And while the Christian sheds this heavenly light in the poor dark world, at the same time he is to hold out— to offer— the Word of Life. The word translated “hold out” is used of holding out, or, presenting, a cup of wine to a person at a feast. It is as though he holds out a cup of the water of life, and offers it to all in the world, crying, “Whosoever will, let him take the Water of Life freely!” (Rev. 22:17).

Beloved, such is the picture the Spirit of God has drawn of the Christian as he passes through this scene. Do you turn from it in hopeless despair, saying, “Never can I attain to such heights as this?” You are right. You never can, most certainly, in your own strength: but never forget, “It is God that worketh in you.” And you may turn to One, and only One, Who ever has passed through this sad world and presented these seven lovely traits, or results. In this exquisite chapter we have seen this One treading those seven steps downward, from the throne to the cross: we have seen Him also on that upward path from the grave to the glory, again seven steps: and now, in rapture, we gaze upon Him once more, in these seven steps through this world: the only One Who ever has trodden that path, as God has marked it out. May you and I, Beloved, seek grace to “follow His steps!” (1 Peter 2:21).

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 24: Presence and Absence

So, my beloved-ones, just-as you always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, cultivate your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is the (One) working in you both the willing and the working for-the-sake of (His)-good-pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13

We have been gazing with adoration on our Lord’s pathway from the throne to the cross; and from the cross to the throne: and if we have taken in at all what that sight means, we will better understand the Queen of Sheba’s feelings when it is recorded “there was no more spirit in her,” (2 Chron. 9:4) as she gazed at the glories of Solomon: but One greater than Solomon is here.

But let us never forget that the Spirit of God has given us this wondrous passage of Scripture in order that we might have this mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus. And now in verse 12, the Apostle goes back to that very practical teaching with which this chapter began. He looks back to those happy times with the saints in Philippi, and how they “always obeyed.” But that was while he was with them, “in my presence,” as he puts it. The word is par-ousia, “being-alongside-of,” and I have tried in the note before this chapter to give some further details of this word. Now the Apostle is in prison in Rome, and how will the saints behave now that he is absent (apousia): no longer “alongside-of” them? Beautiful answer, “now much more in my absence” (vs. 12). In considering the word par-ousia, we have seen that it is

generally reserved for the coming of our Lord: when we will be present with Him: prepared for this meaning by formerly coming to mean “the visit of a King.” I wonder, Beloved, if the Lord could say of us now: in His ap-ousia: His absence: if our obedience is “much more”? You know how it is with someone you dearly love; if absent, you will be even more careful to do that which you know would please them, than you would do were they present. So it was with the Philippian saints and the Apostle they loved so well. May it be so with us and our absent, rejected Lord!

The latter part of this 12th verse has long been a puzzle to many. In the new Roman Catholic “Knox Version” of the Bible, which in many places is excellent: M. Knox translates it: “You must work to earn your salvation, in anxious fear.”

And I sadly fear there are many who would agree with M. Knox. But that is not at all the meaning that the Spirit of God has for us. In the note at the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned two words in this verse on which a flood of light has been thrown by the old papers found in Egyptian rubbish heaps. One of these words is the word translated “work out,” in our verse. Dr. Moulton says of this word: it “is very common with reference to the ‘cultivation’ of allotments.” And if we use this meaning for the word, I think it makes our verse very clear.

It is more than fifty years since I worked on a farm, so I asked a dear farmer brother to help me out about “cultivating.” This is what he says: “I have much enjoyed the thoughts you brought out about Philippians 2:12, and I’m sure it is a verse that has been a puzzle to many, and has been perhaps used in a wrong way by those who think salvation is by works.”

“I believe the word cultivate means just what you said, to loosen the soil so the rain and air can get to the roots so the plant may grow strong and bear fruit. One of the main purposes in cultivating too is to get rid of the weeds, for if they are allowed to grow, the tender plant is robbed of its vigor and cannot bear much fruit.”

“Yes, I have followed the old horse drawn cultivator you speak of and sometimes the sun was pretty hot, and often it was dusty. Of course corn and soya beans were the main crops we cultivated, and we nearly always cultivate them three times during the season.”

“Father always said the first cultivation was the main one, when the plants were young and tender, to get rid of the weeds while they were young, for when they get well rooted it is almost impossible to get rid of them, unless by the hoe, which on big acreage is almost never done being impracticable; but the hoe is a tool for cultivation, and a good one too, as one can get close to the plants without harming them. In a crop like strawberries it is about the only tool one can use and very important, for weeds and grass will soon take the strawberries if they aren’t hoed.”

“It seems to me very interesting, and makes the passage much easier to understand, when you see that `work out’ means to cultivate. The more valuable the crop is, the more carefully the farmer will cultivate it. How carefully and diligently we should cultivate salvation.”

I think this letter makes the meaning of the verse wonderfully clear. How quickly the things of this world make the ground hard, so that the genial warmth of the love of God does not get down to our roots; and the refreshing rain (is it the Word of God, Isa. 55:10,11?) runs off the hardened crust, and we get little or no good from it. Then, Beloved, we need to “cultivate our own salvation.” We need to get out the hoe and break up that crust, get down deep, too, perhaps; so the roots will feel the sunshine and the fresh air and the sweet showers.

And our brother spoke about the weeds, too. You know something about the weeds: those weeds of impure thoughts, of slothfulness, of bad-temper, and a thousand others. I think we find some of them listed in 1 Peter 2:1-2: “Laying aside therefore all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envyings and all evil speakings, as newborn babes desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation.” (New Translation). I think this illustrates our picture well: there are the weeds, and when I was a boy and had long rows of corn and potatoes to hoe, (it was a dirty farm, full of weeds), we used to keep a file and sharpen the hoes now and then, so as to cut the weeds out. We get something the same in Rom. 8:13: “If ye through the Spirit do mortify (that just means, ‘put to death’) the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” In other words, “Kill the weeds.” We get more of them to mortify in Col. 3:5: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Our brother says that with the hoe one can get close to the plants: and that is what we want: don’t let us spare these weeds, even though some of them we have learned to love. And another thing, remember that he tells us they are much easier to kill when they are young: you young folks will do well to remember this. Old bad habits are sometimes terribly hard to kill.

And then notice what he tells us about the strawberries. The more valuable the crop the more careful we are about cultivating it. Can you not just hear the father say to his son, ‘Go work today in my strawberry patch: and be very careful for fear you damage the roots, or cut the young shoots, or harm the tendrils, or spoil the fruit.’ Does not that help us to understand how it is we are to cultivate our own salvation with fear and trembling? It is no light matter we have in hand; and the more deeply we know our own selves, the more we will fear as we take up such a task. It is not the fear that we will be lost. It is not the fear that the Lord will forsake us. But it is the sense of our need of being more prayerful, and more circumspect than ever: feeling that it is a bitter, painful thing to compromise God in any way by want of jealous self-judgment in our walk— fear and trembling because of the seriousness of the conflict.

And we may well ask, “How are we to cultivate our own salvation?” Perhaps the first place should be given to that jealous self-judgment of which we have just spoken. Jealous, not of others, but jealous of God’s claims and His rights in our lives. I fear it is just here that so many of us fall down. We allow things in our lives that in the bottom of our hearts we know should not be there. We wake in the morning, and instead of getting up early for reading the Word, prayer and communion with the Lord, we allow the enemy to whisper, “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep,” (Prov. 24:33) and we need not be surprised that our tender plants do not grow, and so our poverty comes as one that travelleth; and our want as an armed man. (Prov. 24:33-34) And then how often our thoughts call for self-judgment! How we need to gird up the loins of our mind! How easy to allow foolish and even impure thoughts to come in: thoughts of pride and envy! Then we need to get out that sharp hoe, and do some cultivation with fear and trembling.

I wonder how many of our readers make a practice of early rising? You remember if the people of Israel were to get the manna for their day’s need, they had to get it before the sun was up. You remember that our Lord rose up a great while before day, and departed into a solitary place to pray. Later the disciples “earnestly pressed after Him.” It is the only place in the New Testament where this special word is used, stronger than “press after love,” or hospitality, or the many other objects after which we are called to press. And you note we are not exhorted to press after our Lord on that dark, early morning, long before the sun arose: we are only given the example; and our own love to

our Lord will decide whether we shall follow that example, or lie in bed instead. But of this I am sure; these two: diligent self-judgment, and earnest early rising, are two of the most important ways of cultivating our own salvation. Is not this exactly what we find in that passage in 1 Peter we looked at? First, lay aside these sins which we all know so easily beset us: then as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word; and the result is that we “grow up to salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). We have cultivated these tender plants, cultivated our own salvation: the weeds have been cut away, the hard crust broken up, the warm sunshine and the refreshing rain can come down to the roots; and the little plants grow up to salvation.

And just a word about “your own salvation” (vs. 12). The farmer very likely gets the hired man to cultivate his corn and soya beans for him. But you and I cannot do that. We must each cultivate our own salvation. It is like the shield of faith: each must carry his own shield. You remember Goliath had a man that went before him to carry his shield: and it cost him his life. So, in the same way, self-judgment and communion are terribly individual things, into which another can scarcely enter.

And then another thing. Sometimes I see the weeds in my neighbor’s field, and am tempted to leave my field and go over and cultivate his. True, we are to wash each other’s feet: but we need to remember the word, “cultivate your own salvation.” And we may find we have not really helped our neighbor, and mine own vineyard have I not kept.

And now we come to verse 13: “For God is the (One) working in you both the willing and the working for the sake of His good pleasure.” Oh, how glad we should be of this verse! As we look at the unequal struggle of verse 12 without it, we might well fear and tremble, with the wrong kind of fear: we might just as well give up the fight: for our enemies are too strong for us in our own strength. But, thanks be to God, we do not have to fight in our own strength. No! “God is the One working in you.” We have all His mighty power to draw on; and if we will but let Him do the work of cultivating, we will be sure of a good harvest. But too often we like to do it ourselves, in our own strength, and failure is certain.

And I love those words: “both the willing and the working” (vs. 13). Take the question of getting up in the morning: how hard it is on a cold, winter morning to drag ourselves out of bed! There is no “will” to do it at all. Our will is all the other way. Thank God we may call on His strength to make us willing, as well as to make us do it. And why should we? Oh, Listen! “For the sake of His good pleasure.” Is there one who loves Him who would not want to do anything He asks, when it is “for the sake of His good pleasure.” And when we know that “God is the (One) working in you both the willing and the working,” let us also remember “what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things.”

Is that sufficient power for you and me to draw on to cultivate our own salvation? Then, let us, Beloved, draw on that wealth of power, and draw freely: for we will find it impossible to “overdraw.”

Heaven’s Bank

(Rowland Hill)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Note To Chapter 24

PAROUSIA: Presence;

KATERGAZOMAI: Work Out.

A little book called “From Egyptian Rubbish Heaps,” by Dr. J. H. Moulton, gives a very brief account of how some 60 years ago hundreds of thousands of old bits of paper were found in the sands of Egypt: some had been used to stuff embalmed crocodiles. There were old letters, children’s exercise books written at school, and no end of other papers that had been thrown away as useless. Many of these were written at just about the same time as the Greek New Testament; and from these old papers we have been enabled to learn a great deal about certain words in the Greek New Testament, that we never properly understood before.

We hope now to ponder the 12th verse of the 2nd of Philippians, and in that verse we will find two words that have had a flood of light thrown upon them from these old documents from Egypt. They are the Greek words parousia, meaning “presence,” or, “coming”: and katergazomai, meaning “work out.” The first word katergazomai, literally means “being-alongside-of,” and in our verse in Philippians means “presence.” In 2 Cor. 10:10: “his bodily presence is weak,” it is the same word: but everywhere else in the New Testament it is translated “coming,” generally it is reserved for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. I have a very valuable old Greek Lexicon by Dr. Cremer, dated 1880, in which he speaks of this meaning of the word: he says: “It is not easy to explain how the term came to be used in this sense.” Listen while Dr. Moulton tells us what Dr. Cremer would so much like to have heard some 35 years earlier: “Our Lord in speaking of His coming again uses the word parousia, which in the later parts of the New Testament becomes almost a technical term. Now that word so used, denoting ‘advent’ or ‘presence,’ had something very much deeper in meaning. Egyptian papyri of the third and second centuries B.C. give some allusions which utterly puzzled the first editors.... Two words came together stephanouparousias, which we have now learned to read. The Ptolemies, kings of Egypt after Alexander’s time, were not popular, generally speaking, and I must say I do not think they deserved popularity. The British sovereign, King George, was once up in Lancashire, rode all around the country, went into the cottages and talked with the people, and left behind him the most gracious memories. That was one sort of a royal visit. But the royal visits of the Ptolemies were quite different. When they came to distant parts of the country there were appropriate manifestations of enthusiasm, but it was all worked up beforehand. The tax-collector came round and extracted from people’s pockets money for what was called a ‘crown tax.’ A free-will offering of a golden crown was made to the king on such occasions, to represent the spontaneous loyalty of the people. That was the type of thing that gives the setting for this word parousia. By getting the meaning of ‘royal visit,’ unconsciously the word was prepared beforehand for the time when the King of kings came in great humility, and they called His coming the Parousia. And we are relying faithfully upon the promise of another visit, the last and greatest, some day, we know not when.”

How lovely that the Spirit uses this word for my Lord's coming again: He is coming to be "present" with me: to be "alongside-of" me: and I will be "alongside-of" Him. In Philippians 2:12 Paul had been along-side of his beloved converts in Philippi; but now he is absent. The word to be 'present,' is parousia: the word for 'absent' is ap-ousia: 'being-away from.' In one sense our Lord is now `ap-ousia,' but soon, very soon, 'yet a very little while,' and He will be 'par-ousia.'

We must speak more fully of the remaining word, katergazomai, so will not try and describe it here, but leave it till we speak of verse 12.

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 23: Supremely Exalted

"Wherefore God also supremely-exalted Him, and bestowed-on Him the Name, the (Name) supreme-above every name, that in the Name JESUS every knee should-bow, of-(things) heavenly and earthly and infernal, and every tongue should publicly-confess that JESUS CHRIST (is) LORD, to (the) glory of God (the) Father."

Philippians 2:9-11

In the earlier verses of this chapter, we have seen how the Lord of Glory, (as someone has beautifully remarked), "laid aside His garments; and took a towel and girded Himself" (John 13:4). Now let us see the upward path:

1. Wherefore God also supremely-exalted Him,

2. And bestowed on Him the Name, The (Name) supreme-above every name,

3. That in the Name JESUS every knee should bow,

4. Of (things) heavenly

5. And earthly

6. And infernal,

7. And every tongue should publicly-confess that JESUS CHRIST (is) LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

"Wherefore" is the word with which His exaltation begins. It reminds us of our Lord's own words, repeated twice: "He that humbleth himself, shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14). And none ever humbled himself as the Lord of Glory: well is it indeed that He should be supremely-exalted! "HE humbled Himself," (vs. 8) but, not, you will note, "He exalted Himself". No, "GOD supremely-exalted Him." Nor may we pass by that little word "also." "Wherefore God also supremely-exalted Him." In the Greek it is placed in a very emphatic position: as if to contrast God's thoughts of His Son with man's treatment of Him.

"Supremely-exalted" is one word in the Greek. The Spirit of God through Paul loves to add to many words the little word "huper," (which corresponds to our word "super"), and we have translated it here, "supremely." Examples of other words to which "huper" is added are: "supremely-above" in Eph. 1:21 & 4:10; "super-intercede," Rom. 8:26; "super-conqueror," Rom. 8:37; and there are a number of others. How well this word of "supreme-exaltation" fits the position due to such supreme-humiliation! It is the only place in the New Testament where it is found; as though the Spirit of God had reserved it for this special passage.

There were seven steps downward in our Lord's humiliation; and there seem to be seven steps upward in His exaltation: (as shown in the arrangement above of this scripture): this is the first, "God also supremely-exalted Him." The aorist tense is used, meaning one act: as though in it is included His resurrection up from the grave: His ascension up to heaven, and on up to the throne, at God's right hand.

The second step is "He bestowed on Him the name, the (name) supreme-above every name. 'Bestowed' is used as a translation of a Greek word formed from the word always used for grace." One would like to say, God "graced Him with the name," but that might convey more the thought of graceful, than gracious, or free-giving. It is the same word used in chapter 1:29, when God bestowed on us not only the privilege of believing in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. (And let us remember if we suffer we shall also reign). The better reading is not "given him a name," (vs. 9) but, "the Name." It is a special name, "the name) supreme-above every name." The word here translated "supreme-above" is again huper, that was joined to "exalted" in that first step upwards. We may ask, "What is 'the name'?". Some think it to be the mystic name JEHOVAH: others, that it may be "My new name" in Rev. 3:12. But from what follows, "That in the name JESUS every knee should bow," I cannot but think that JESUS is "the name, the (name) supreme above every name." Let us remember that the name JESUS means JEHOVAH the-SAVIOR. And let us remember also Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. Mr. Kelly writes: "The lowly name that was His as Nazarene on the earth must be honored everywhere. God's glory is concerned in it. In the name of Jesus, or, in virtue of His name every knee shall bow." It may be "in the name of JESUS," (Col. 3:17) or, it may be, "in the name Jesus" (Col. 3:17); I confess I like the latter translation: but it might be either.

"Every knee should bow" (vs. 10). I write in a Moslem land, where all around are those who put the name "Mehommed" above the name JESUS: nor will they bow to that worthy name, for they will not acknowledge Him as GOD. But the day is coming when every one of them shall in virtue of the name JESUS bow his knees. And the Communists, who hate that precious name, whether dead or living, each one of them will also bow. And those knees that have only bowed to idols will, in the coming day, bow to that name supreme-above every name. Yes, and the infidels and the scoffers, it matters not how bold they are now: and "the fearful," those who do not now bow for fear of the laugh of a fellow-mortal: each one of these shall surely bow. Notice, it does not bunch them together, and say "all the knees shall bow." It looks at them each individually, "every knee shall bow" (Rom. 14:11).

And the Spirit of God divides these into three classes: "the heavenly, the earthly, and the infernal" (or, those under the earth). Angels and demons, living and dead, saved and lost will all then publicly (for so the word would intimate) acknowledge Him as LORD. The word "LORD" is in an emphatic position, so the emphasis is on it: "JESUS CHRIST (is) LORD" (vs. 11).

“Of (things) heavenly and earthly and infernal”; the Greek may be either masculine or neuter: so it may read as we have put it: or, it may read as J.N.D. has it in the New Translation: “Of heavenly and earthly and infernal (beings)” (vs. 10). The former includes the latter, but goes out to a much wider circle: and the 148th Psalm and the 8th of Romans would seem to warrant us in including all creation in the homage due to “the name JESUS.”

Let them praise the name of the LORD: for His name alone is excellent; His glory is above the earth and heaven” (Psa. 148:7-13).

But not only must every knee bow: but every tongue shall confess Him LORD. For those who confess Him LORD now, it is salvation. (Rom. 10:9). But those who refuse Him now as LORD, shall surely one day acknowledge Him thus: but only to be cast into the lake of fire.

And so we find the seven steps downward are matched by seven steps upward: just as the “exceeding sorrowful” (Mark 14:34) of Matt. 26:38 is matched by the “exceeding glad” of Psa. 21:6, the Resurrection Psalm.

Our passage began, “God supremely-exalted Him.” It ends by telling us that this supreme-exaltation of the Son is “to the glory of God the Father” (vs. 11). He could say of all His earthly path of humiliation: “I have glorified Thee on the earth” (John 17:4). How blessed to see in His path of exaltation we find the same thing: and well we know that this is just as He would have it. “They went both of them together” (Gen. 22:8) is true both of going to the cross and to the Glory.

Another has said, in writing of this portion: and I would borrow his words: “So ends our exposition of this amazing passage— oh, that one could have done it better, more worthily. The reader may well be constrained to throw this poor study on one side and to take up the inspired record itself and, on his knees, pore over the sacred words themselves; and then.... join, with deepest adoration, in the heavenly tribute of Rev. 5:12, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.... Amen!”

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But, Beloved, let us not forget that these things have been written that you and I might have this mind in us, which was also in Christ Jesus: and that was the lowly, subject mind.

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“The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may (HE) give unto you.... that ye may know.... what is the exceeding greatness of His power.... which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things” Amen. (Eph. 1:17-22).

Christ Jesus

Made Himself

Of no reputation ...

Where for

God

also

hath highly exalted

Him.

Philippians 2:7, 9.

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 22: Seven Steps Downward

“Have this mind in you which (was) also in Christ Jesus: Who subsisting in (the) form of God, not as-a-means-of-gain He-counted the being equal-with God: but He made Himself empty, taking (a) slave’s form, being-come in men’s likeness, and, being-found in-fashion as man, made Himself low, becoming obedient until death, even death of (a) cross.”

Philippians 2:5-8

“Have this mind in you which (was, is) also in Christ Jesus: Who subsisting in the form of God, not as a means of gain He counted the being equal with God:”

1. But He emptied Himself,

2. Taking a slave’s form,

3. Being come in men’s likeness,

4. And, being found in fashion as man,

5. Made Himself low,

6. Becoming obedient until death,

7. Even death of a cross."

In our last meditation we spoke of our Lord's seven steps downward: and now we have tried to show these steps.

We have pondered that first step: "He emptied Himself." Remember it was when He was in the form of God that He emptied Himself. It was love made Him empty Himself: empty Himself of all His outward glory: but let us remember that He never ceased to be God. That Babe in the manger was Emmanuel, "God with us," just as truly God— upholding all things by the word of His power, as when all things were created by Him and for Him.

But before we ponder those further steps downward, let us stop and remind ourselves why it is that the Spirit of God has given us this amazing sight of the pathway of the eternal Son of God from the highest heights of Glory, down to the lowest depths of shame and suffering that it was possible to go. It is, Beloved, that you and I might gaze on that wondrous sight, and thus the mind which was in Christ Jesus might be fashioned in us. We love to go up: He came down: that is the mind we would long to have, if we are to be like Him while we are down here. May the Lord help us to remember this, as we ponder His remaining six steps downward!

Not only did He empty Himself of all His outward glory in the form of God: but He took a slave's form. He might have taken the form of an Emperor or of a mighty King, in wealth and luxury: but, no, by His own act, (for I think the Greek implies this), He emptied Himself and deliberately took a slave's form. And the remarkable thing is that the word form is the very same word as in the previous verse: "Who subsisting in the form of God" (vs. 6). As we have seen, it means, not exterior form, but inner, essential quality. He was not like an actor might be, dressed up in the fashion of a slave: though indeed we see Him in the outward character of a slave in the thirteenth of John, where He laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself, and did the slave's work, of washing the feet. And Peter fully realized this, I believe, and had it in his mind when he wrote: "Be clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5): for this might well be translated: "Gird on the slave's apron"; for the word in its noun form means this. Here we see the inner, essential quality, the very spirit of our Lord, shining out so that we may gaze upon Him in wonder and awe.

But perhaps the Hebrew servant in Ex. 21 tells the story best. He was to serve for six years, but in the seventh year "he shall go out free for nothing." But the Hebrew servant (and it means a slave) might say: "I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever" (Ex. 21:5-6). That pierced ear was the pledge and the proof that he shall be his slave forever. And those pierced hands and feet and side tell the same story of "Christ Jesus: who.... emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a slave."

But whose slave is He? "I love My Master.... He shall serve Him forever." In Philippians it is left to be understood to whom He is the slave: and it is true that He said I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister: and that was to the needs of men; and today upon His throne, He still serves us, our Advocate and our Intercessor: and even after He had returned to the Glory, when His servants went out and preached everywhere, almost the last words of the gospel that presents Him as the "perfect Servant" (Isa. 42:19) are, "The Lord working with them" (Mark 16:20). And so we see Him still serving and still working: but let us remember He is not the slave of men, but of God— "I love My Master," (Ex. 21:5) as the Hebrew servant put it.

And the next step we are to trace is: "Being come in men's likeness." We might, perhaps, have translated this, "Being born in men's likeness," for we usually use "born" to translate this same word in Gal. 4:4. But "being come," is probably nearer to the meaning. The word "likeness" is the third word mentioned in our last meditation: Homoioma. It is the same word as is used in Rom. 8:3: "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." His outward appearance was just like a man among men. Judas had to give those who came to take Him a sign, for there was nothing in His outward appearance to mark Him out especially from other men, such as the halo we see in the pictures. He came "in men's likeness."

The fourth step downwards is: "Being found in fashion as man" (vs. 8). I think the words "being found" have the same meaning as in Luke 17:18: "There are not found that returned to give glory to God save this stranger." See also Acts 5:39 & 2 Cor. 5:3. The word "fashion" here is scheema, meaning the outward appearance. It is most wonderful that He took a slave's form, the inner, essential qualities of a slave— but He was found in outward appearance as man. Perhaps we should not say "as a man:" for never was man like this Man: for He was very God. And yet He had man's appearance: "Pleased as man with men to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel." Isaiah had cried, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down," (Isa. 64:1) and that is just what the Lord God Almighty did: He did come down: but He came down "being found in fashion as man" (vs. 8). But all the time He trod our sad world, He was still "Emmanuel": "God with us."

The next step is, "He humbled Himself" (vs. 8). Perhaps more exactly, "He made Himself low," or, "He made Himself very low." The word is used in old writings, speaking of the river Nile, "it runs low." As God, He emptied Himself: as Man, He made Himself low. This is a further step downwards than being found in fashion as a man: for, as we have remarked, He might have been found in fashion as a man, and have chosen to be an Emperor or mighty King: He might have chosen honor and wealth: but not so: "He made Himself low," "He humbled Himself" (vs. 8). He could say, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). But let us remember that this is "The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy" (Isa. 57:15). After meditating on His path downwards, we can better understand His words that follow: "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. 57:15). How much most of us need to gaze upon Him, till we are in some measure changed into the same image, and have that mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus.

And now we come to what we would have supposed was the last step He could take: "Becoming obedient until death." He had taken the form of a slave; and the slave's portion was obedience: and He showed forth His obedience, even until death. Our Authorized Version might be misunderstood to think it was to death He was obedient. But it was obedience to His Father's will, even unto death. Our Lord had said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down His life for his friends" (John 15:13). And His death at Golgotha not only manifested forth His matchless love, but also His devoted obedience.

Could there be another step downwards, beyond death? We would not have thought so: but the Father, Who looked down with perfect delight on all that pathway, sees one more step. Not only did He become obedient unto death: but that death, was the death of a cross. That last step tells out the awfulness, the horror, the shame, the anguish of the death to which He became obedient. We see better the force of the words that tell out that last step, when we ponder such Scriptures as 1 Cor. 1:23: "Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock"; Gal. 5:11: "The scandal of the cross"; Heb. 12:2: "Jesus.... endured the cross, despising the shame." There was probably no death from which one would so

much shrink as “the death of the cross” (vs. 8). It was to this, the lowest step that could be taken, that the Lord of Glory went.

Beloved, let us remember, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (vs. 5).

And let us remember, also, our Lord’s own words: “He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:38).

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 21: The Mind in Christ Jesus

“Have this mind in you which (was) also in Christ Jesus: Who subsisting in (the) form of God, not as-a-means-of-gain He-counted the being equal-with God, but made Himself empty.”

Philippians 2:5-7

When a brother suggested, some years ago, that we have a series of articles on the Epistle to the Philippians, my thoughts went at once to the passage we are to begin to meditate upon now: and I thought, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (2 Cor. 2:16). Who is sufficient to attempt to expound such words as these?

It is one of those amazing portions of the Scriptures that is set before us with so few words, and such short and simple words, the amazing pathway of our Savior from Heaven’s highest Glory, down to Calvary’s depth of woe. May the Lord grant that writer and reader may approach this portion with bowed head and unshod feet.

Not only is the passage itself so sublime, that it seems to defy the human spirit to comprehend what is found in it, even though these truths are expressed in the simplest language: but, also, the Greek itself, in part, is far from easy to follow, as though even the noblest human language is still unable to describe the mysteries of the Godhead. May God Himself help us, whether writing or reading!

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“Have this mind in you,” (or, “Have this for your mind”)—your principle of thought and feeling — “which (was, and is,) also in Christ Jesus”—the principle of thought and feeling which was in Him (Phil. 2:5).

There is no verb in the latter part of the verse, but we must use one in English. We generally use the word “was”, but there is nothing in the Greek to limit the meaning to either past or present: and even though exalted to the highest Glory, He is “this same Jesus,” (Acts 1:11) so we have inserted, “was, and is.” “Have this mind in you which (was and is) also in Christ Jesus.” And what was “this mind”? Was it not an utter and absolute self forgetfulness? Oh, my Brethren, here is the cure for all our quarrels and divisions, our misunderstandings and difficulties with one another: “Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus.”

Let us remember:

We have “the mind of Christ” (I Cor. 2:16).

We are to “learn of Christ” (Matt. 11:29).

We have “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

We are to “follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

Christ is to “dwell in your hearts” (Eph. 3:17).

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“Who subsisting in the form of God” (vs. 6).

And now the Spirit begins to describe to us what was this “mind of Christ.” I am sorry that it seems impossible to seek to show forth the treasures in this passage without referring to the Greek words, which the Spirit uses with such care and discrimination: for Greek is a much richer language than English, and makes differences where in English it is almost impossible to bring them out. We have in this passage three words for existence.

1. To be: (einai).

2. To be beforehand, to subsist: (huparchein).

3. To begin to be: (ginesthai).

It is not by accident the Spirit uses these three different words, and we lose much if we disregard their differences. The second of these words (huparchein) is the word He uses in the passage just quoted: “Who subsisting in the form of God” (vs. 6). This word tells us that Christ Jesus was “in the form of God” before He came to this earth as Man. This word may not tell as much as the first verse of John’s Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” (John 1:1) but it is in entire harmony with it, and asserts quite plainly pre-existence in the form of God, though it does not assert in so many words, His eternal pre-existence: but this is brought out in other Scriptures, such as Psa. 90:2: “From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God”: John 1, and other Scriptures.

In the passage before us we will see an amazing pathway of seven steps downward from the Throne to the Cross: but let us never forget that the beginning of this pathway: the very foundation of all else is this: Christ Jesus had a pre-existence in the form of God. Let us never forget this: this is the truth that the devil seeks so desperately to take from us: may we never, never give it up. The manger and the cross could never have been without the Throne beforehand. (Heb. 1:8).

And in the sixth chapter of Isaiah the Spirit of God draws back the veil, and lets us gaze for a moment on “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone.... for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts.”

In John’s Gospel, chapter 12, verses 37 41, the Spirit of God reveals to us, that this One Whom Isaiah saw, and of Whom he spoke— the King, Jehovah of hosts, before Whom the seraphims veiled their faces —He is our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Here we gaze upon Him in His glory, in the form of God, long before ever He took upon Him the form of a slave, and was made in the likeness of men.

And again, as we gaze upon Him passing through this scene, in New Testament days, we see at times His glory as very God from all eternity shining through the veil of flesh: as, for example, when he talked with Nicodemus, He says: “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen” (John 3:11). “Obviously He speaks as One who is familiar with God; not merely as One Who acted from God, but Who pronounced with His authority, speaking as One Who is absolutely and perfectly at home with God. ‘We speak’ says He, ‘that we do know’; and the word implies intimate knowledge ... intrinsic personal knowledge; not that which was given, which a prophet might utter as presented to him, had he the means of revelation, but as One who knew God and His glory consciously. God alone, He who was God, could thus rightly speak, and none other. In the consciousness of this divine knowledge therefore Jesus speaks. At the same time He gives His testimony as to what He had seen. It was not only One who came from God, and so went to God, but also One who while He was God speaks of scenes of glory in which He had been. He was with God as well as was God. From this perfect knowledge of God, and familiarity with heaven He makes the declaration: ‘We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen’.” (W. Kelly).

We must now ponder carefully the words “in the form of God” (vs. 6). There are three words used in this passage expressive of the general idea of resemblance:

1. Form: (Morphee).

2. Fashion: (Scheema).

3. Likeness: (Homoioma).

The first alone is applicable to God, for it alone has the sense (not of external appearance), but of essential quality. I do not think we have an English word like this, but we use it with “meta” put in front of it, in the word “metamorphose.” Putting meta in front of it indicates a change over: so the whole word tells of a change in the essential quality of something. We use it of rocks that have had their very texture and internal form changed by terrific heat and pressure: we say they are metamorphosed.

The second word (scheema) tells of external appearance. You might paint the rocks, so they looked completely different, but their essential quality remains the same: they are the same rocks, though they look different outside: their “scheema” is changed: but it is a temporary change.

We find words from the roots of these two words in Rom. 12:2: “Be not conformed to this world”: a true Christian may take the outward form of the fashion of this world, like the rocks being painted, but the essential inward quality remains the same. She has cut her hair and painted her face and become conformed (sum-scheema) to this world, (and the brothers can be conformed to this world, too): but deep down inside where nobody sees but God, she still is His: and so the passage goes on, “But be ye transformed (the very word, metamorphosed) by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2). In Rom. 8:29, God has predestinated us (to be) sum-morphosed to the image of His Son. I think that just means that God has predestinated us to be essentially changed inside to be like the image of His Son. In Philippians 3:20 we will read that the Lord Jesus Christ shall meta-scheema the body of our humiliation (to be) sum-morphosed to the body of His glory. This would seem to tell us that the Lord Jesus is going to change the transitory, outward form of our bodies, now bearing scars and wrinkles, often hair and teeth gone: but this will all be changed to the essential quality of bodies that are like the body of His glory. But even now down here we may be metamorphosed from glory unto glory, by the Spirit of the Lord. And how is this accomplished? By gazing on the glory of the Lord—now indeed as in a glass, like we used to do when we were little children, and used a bit of smoked glass to look at the sun, because it was too bright for mortal eye. (2 Cor. 3:18).

But let us be absolutely clear that with our Lord Jesus Christ there never was any suggestion of metamorphose: a change in His essential being, as being very God. Before ever He came to our sad world, He subsisted in the very form of God. He never needed to be changed to be like God, as we are changed to be like Himself. But this same word is used of His transfiguration in Matt. 17:2 and Mark 9:2, in describing the change that came to the body He had taken when He became a Man. I think this is because it was a sample— an anticipative assumption— of that resurrection body which is permanent and everlasting.

“Who subsisting in the form of God, counted not as a means of gain the being equal with God” (Phil. 2:6).

Now we come to a passage where it is very hard for us to be quite certain we are right. You may look it up in various translations, and will see that different people translate it in different ways. It seems to me this is what the Spirit is seeking to tell us, as He brings heavenly truths to our poor, dull, mortal minds: “Christ Jesus.... counted not the being equal with God as a means of gain, but made Himself empty.” I shall not attempt to give you the reasons from the Greek Testament that make me believe this to be the Spirit’s meaning: they may be found in Dr. C. J. Vaughan priceless little book, “St. Paul’s Epistle to the Philippians for English Readers,” to whom I am deeply indebted, not only for most of what we have had before us today, but for much else that I have learned from this dear man of God.

Another rendering that appeals to me very much is the following: “He did not reckon His equality with God a treasure to be tightly grasped. Nay, He emptied Himself.” But I would suppose the rendering we have used is the more accurate. But I am not sure.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was already from all eternity in the form of God, and He was equal with God: He was (and is) “Jehovah’s fellow” (Zech. 13:7). He had not to grasp at this: it was His already: His by right. But He might have used this glory and majesty and unbounded power, for aggrandizement, or advancement of Himself: but He did not: on the contrary, “He made Himself of no reputation”: “He made Himself empty.” “He emptied Himself.” Amazing, matchless, unspeakable grace! The words “the being equal with God,” are in the neuter

plural, “the being equal things,” and this is no accident. Another has said this “calls attention rather to the characteristics than to the personality,” and still another suggests that perhaps the Spirit avoids the masculine to remove any risk of “dividing the substance of the God-head.” There are quite a few “unexpected neuters” in the Greek New Testament. One longs that some wise and spiritual man could help us understand them better, but for some we must, perhaps, wait till we reach Home, and “know as we are known.”

“Who subsisting in the form of God, He counted not as a means of gain the being equal with God, but made Himself empty.”

We come now to the last words of the above sentence: “But made Himself empty,” or, “but emptied Himself,” (vs. 7) or, as in our loved Authorized Version: “but made Himself of no reputation” (vs. 7). Perhaps the second, “But emptied Himself,” (vs. 7) represents the Greek most closely; but possibly the first, “But made Himself empty,” is a little easier to understand, and I think gives the true sense. But the truth is the same in any case: “He emptied Himself” HE, the One in Whom all the fullness was pleased to dwell: (Col. 1:19): HE, that filleth all in all: (Eph. 1:23). Yes: “HE made Himself empty.” Instead of taking to Himself (as equality with God would have enabled Him to do without stint or limit), “He made Himself empty.”

Come and gaze on that manger. Do you know of any other kingly babe who was, of his own will, laid in a manger? Gaze on Him, “wearied with His journey” (John 4:6) sitting on the well! See Him on the hillside, when all others went to their own home: for He had no home to which He might go. See the foxes and the birds: they had their homes, but the Son of Man had not where to lay down His head, until He came to the cross, and having cried “Tetelestai” ... “It is finished” ... He laid down His head on the cross: the only place in this world where we read He ever laid down His head. (For the words are the same in Luke 9:58 and John 19:30). Watch Him as He hungers. Hear Him as He cries, “I thirst!” Listen, as He groans, and as He weeps. Remember, this is He Who is equal with God, Who subsisted in the form of God: “But He made Himself empty.” “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9).

More than fifty years ago that one little verse, those few, few words: “Christ Jesus.... made Himself of no reputation”: changed my whole life, and my whole outlook on life. May God grant that these same words may change the lives of some of you, my beloved readers!

He made Himself empty

He emptied Himself.

He made Himself of no reputation.

Do you wonder I linger over these words? They are to me amongst the dearest of any in this dear old Book. Use the translation you like best, the meaning is the same, but Beloved, let them sink down deep, deep into your heart.

I have just spent a few weeks in Canada, and a beloved brother, speaking of a family well known to us both, remarked: “They are not good Canadians. Good Canadians spend their time getting as much as they can, and making their homes as comfortable as possible ... and such a thing never seems to cross their mind.” Maybe they had looked on Him Who made Himself empty.

“Empty.” The picture is of one who is empty-handed, destitute of everything. “I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty” (Ruth 1:21). The husbandmen sent the servants away empty. (Mark 12:3). We generally seek to make ourselves full. He made Himself empty. We covet and seek a reputation. He made Himself of no reputation. When He wanted to see a penny, He must ask someone to show Him one. When He wanted money for a tax, He must command a fish to supply it. “He made Himself empty.”

I had hoped to speak in this chapter of all those seven steps downward, but perhaps the Spirit of God has given us enough to ponder for the present.

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 20: Hinderances to Minding the One Thing

“(Do) nothing according-to party-spirit, nor according-to vain-glory, but in lowly-mindedness esteeming one-another more-excellent-than themselves: not each having-the-eye-on the-(interests) of-themselves, but each on the-(interests) of-others also.”

Philippians 2:3-4

“Nothing according to party-spirit, nor according to vain-glory, but in lowly-mindedness esteeming one another more excellent than themselves: not each having-the-eye-on the (interests) of-themselves, but each on the-(interests) of-others also.”

These verses follow straight on from those we last pondered, which ended: “Fill full my joy when ye mind the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, minding the one thing.” Now we will see that the Spirit of God brings before us those things which hinder this unity: and we will begin to see God’s cure for those hindrances.

There is no verb at the beginning of verse 3, and to make good English we must supply one, as, for example —“Let nothing be according to party spirit,” or, “Doing (or, do) nothing according to party spirit.” “According to” is the literal translation, and indicates the principle on which the thing is done, or the state of mind which produces the act. There are six different words in the Greek New Testament all translated “strife” in the English New Testament. The particular one used here is the same as that translated “contention” in chapter 1:16 (Authorized Version). It has the meaning of “rivalry, party-spirit, factiousness, ambition, self-seeking.” It is listed as one of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5.

The two great hindrances to “minding the one thing” (which we considered in verse 2) are, Dr. Lightfoot points out, “the exaltation of party and the exaltation of self. Both these are condemned here.” The first is condemned in “party-spirit,” the second in “vain-glory.” The Scripture says: “Only by pride cometh contention,” (Prov. 13:10) and this is just what we see here: pride of party, (yet I think it includes personal rivalry or ambition) or, pride of person. And, Beloved, let us not forget how very prone we all are to these things, and how very easily they creep into our lives, and into our meetings. Pride is so terribly natural to us all! “Human nature is always disposed to say ‘we’ if it cannot say I” (J.N.D.) Even though we may profess to belong to no party, but to the Church of God alone, we so easily become proud of that— and we make

ourselves into the very party we deny. And need I say how easily and how often, by thought, by word, by deed, we are governed by "vainglory," personal vanity, in plain words: self conceit.

"But in lowly-mindedness esteeming one another more excellent than themselves." The word "but" is a strong word, drawing our earnest attention to the very great contrast between lowly-mindedness and party-spirit or vain-glory. The words "one another" are really in the plural, but I do not know how this can be said in English, to make it clearer than it is. We have already noticed how much we get about our mind, or minding; and in the word "lowly-mindedness" we find this again. In Eph. 4:2 we find exactly the same word as one of the bonds which bind the saints together. There it is linked with "meekness." Years ago I was walking with Mr. Willie Crossly, when suddenly he asked: "Christopher, what is the difference between lowliness (or, lowly-mindedness) and meekness?" I had to reply, "I don't know, Mr. Crossly." He said, "I will tell you. Lowly-mindedness will never give offense. Meekness will never take offense." Oh, that we each had more of these two qualities! How much strife and contention would be avoided!

In our chapter we get only "lowly-mindedness," without meekness: for I think the Spirit of God is bringing before us the positive side of our walk: rather than the negative side, which provides for getting along with difficult brethren or sisters. The Spirit does not look at the Philippian saints as "difficult." He sees them in all their zeal and warm-heartedness and love for the gospel and their Lord, as well as to their Lord's prisoner, the Apostle himself. So it would be out of place to add meekness. And if we each obeyed this blessed teaching in these verses in Philippians 2, there would never be any strife amongst us; and having lowly-mindedness, meekness would not be called for when having to do with the saints.

But notice what is connected with "lowly-mindedness." "In lowly-mindedness esteeming one another more excellent than themselves." If we have truly learned ourselves in the presence of our Savior, then we will be the more ready to obey this injunction. And let us remember that "one another" is plural. Do we ever think, even though the words may not pass our lips, "How glad I am the meeting where I go is more separate than that group of Christians over there." "Those to whom I belong are better taught in the Word than so-and-so." "We would not do the kind of things those people do." Is this esteeming one another more excellent than themselves? What is this but party-spirit? What is it but sectarianism? And pride linked with party-spirit.

Nor are such thoughts limited to the plural. "I am holier than thou" (Isa. 65:5) is in the singular. Our tongues may not utter such words, but our thoughts may tell us, "I am more spiritual than that person." "I spend more time over the Word and in prayer than Brother Blank." And so it goes: for we each know the plague of our own hearts. I think it was Spurgeon who said: "There is pride of face, pride of place, and pride of race, but the worst pride of all, is pride of grace." And, alas, this is the pride to which the saints are, perhaps, most prone. But not only are we not to esteem ourselves as better than others: but we are to esteem others as better than ourselves: and we will, if close enough to Christ: and if we see ourselves, the person we know best, in the light of His holiness and love.

And now we come to two other exhortations that also hit most of us very hard: "Not each having the eye on the interests of themselves, but each on the interests of others also." In our ordinary English Bible we read: "Look not every man on his own things, etc." The word translated "look" does have this meaning: but it is not the ordinary word for "look," but comes from a word meaning a mark on which to fix the eye. In the third chapter of our Epistle we get the word itself translated mark. (verse 14). We find the same word as in verse 4 also in 2 Cor. 5:18, which Mr. Kelly excellently translates: "While we have the eye, not on the things that are seen, etc." So we have used the same translation here; and I hope it brings home to us more forcibly the urgency of this exhortation.

In the Greek Testament there is no word for "interests" in either place: only the article "the," in the plural; and we have to fill in what the Spirit means us to understand: and that may have a very wide application. The Authorized Version uses "things." Mr. Darby uses "qualities," or, in a note "advantages." I suppose the word "interests" means the things that interest us. We sometimes sing: "A mind at leisure from itself, To soothe and sympathize."

What a lovely sight it is, and how refreshing to find one who is so free from looking at his own interests, that he can regard and care for the interests of others.

How it warms the heart and draws us close together. But, sad to say, most of us are too busy with our own affairs to have very much regard for the interests of others. "Each" in both places is plural. May the Lord Himself teach us these blessed truths we have just been pondering. "The more we cleave to Christ, and are taught of the Spirit, the more shall we be of one mind in the Lord, not agreeing after the fashion of men, but taught by the one Book, we shall grow into oneness of mind and judgment in all things. This is the way to bring about true unity, 'and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.'" (Chapter 3:15).

OTHERS

(Freda Hanbury Allen)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 19: Mind the One Thing

"If (there be) therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye my joy, that ye may be likeminded, having the same love, (being) of one accord, of one mind."

"If, then, (there is) any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of (the) Spirit, if any tenderheartedness and compassions, Fill full my joy when ye mind the same (thing), having the same love, joined-in-soul, minding the one (thing)."

Philippians 2:1-2

"If, then, (there is)

any encouragement in Christ,

if any comfort of love,

if any fellowship of (the) Spirit,

if any tender-heartedness and compassions,

Fill full my joy" (Phil. 2:1-2).

We must ever remember as we read the Word of God, that the chapter and verse divisions were put in by men, and not by the Holy Spirit: and too often, I fear, through these, we are apt to lose the connection that the Spirit of God has established. I think this is the case in the division between chapter one and chapter two of Philippians.

In the last verse but one of the first chapter we read that to them it was given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Immediately, in the first verse of chapter two, the Apostle reminds them of the encouragement there is in Christ. When we are suffering, especially suffering for Christ's sake: what a thing it is to have encouragement: and when that encouragement is in Christ, how sure and blessed it is! You remember when Paul was in prison in Jerusalem: perhaps through his own self-will, perhaps grieving over the dishonor done to the name of Christ that day in the Council (Acts 23): very likely greatly discouraged and cast down: that night, following all this trouble, the Lord Himself not an angel, came and stood by him: not to remind him of his failure, but to say: "Be of good cheer, Paul!" (Acts 23:11). That is indeed encouragement in Christ. Paul could speak from well-tried experience, when he says: "If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ." That little word "if" is not expressing any question or doubt: but has the meaning of "since": "Since there is such encouragement in Christ." We will find four grand motives for the exhortation Paul is about to give: this the first.

You will notice that in our beloved Authorized Version the word we have translated "encouragement" is there translated "consolation." And the word does have this meaning consolation. Dr. Vaughan beautifully says of it: "This great gospel word is generally said to have two distinct senses, exhortation and consolation. But in fact the two meet in encouragement. On the one hand it never means cold or bare exhortation; on the other it never means mere soothing. It is always sympathetic, and it is always animating. It is cheering on. It is the call of the general who heads, sword in hand, the army which he would incite to bravery. The word encouragement (which is, by derivation, putting the heart into another) seems to be a fair summary of the contents of the Greek word.... It is not necessary, however, to force the one rendering upon every passage. Here, (in Phil. 2:1), we need comfort for a different Greek word in the next clause." I might add that Mr. Darby generally translates this word encouragement, and, though he translates it comfort here, in the footnote in his larger edition, he says: the word "is 'encouragement,' by word or any way, and so 'comfort.'"

But the dear Philippian saints not only needed encouragement, they needed comfort also: so he continues, "If" there is in Christ "any comfort of love" (vs. 1). I think the words "there is.... in Christ," (inserted above), are understood in this case. The exact word translated comfort here, is only found in this place in the New Testament, but words formed from the same root occur several times, as for example, in John 11:19 & 31, where friends came to comfort Martha and Mary. How sweet to remember that we may find the very same comfort in Christ, in His love: and there is no comfort like the "comfort of love" (vs. 1). The Scripture says: "As one whom his mother Comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Isa. 66:13). That is, I suppose, the highest earthy picture of the "comfort of love" (vs. 1). When a little child (and often, a big child) needs comfort, he goes to his mother, where he knows he will find in very truth the comfort of love. That is what we find in Christ, in how much greater a degree!

The third motive for the exhortations to follow is: If there be "any fellowship of the Spirit" (vs. 1). We must remember that in the old manuscripts there was no difference between capitals and small letters, (for all were capitals), so we cannot be perfectly certain whether the word "spirit," should have a capital or not: whether it refers to the fellowship between the spirits of the saints: or the fellowship we have in the Spirit of God. Possibly both are included. Every true saint of God has the Spirit of God dwelling in him; and by God's Spirit every saint is linked to Christ, and linked to each other. The Spirit of God is such a bond between saints, that none can ever break it: all our divisions and sects and parties cannot break that bond of "fellowship of the Spirit" (vs. 1). It, rather, should I say, HE is like that middle bar of the tabernacle, out of sight, that shot through the boards from the one end to the other, (Ex. 36:33), but it was the strongest bond to hold the boards together. We will see in a moment the exceeding beauty and need for this reminder as a motive for the Apostle's exhortation that is to follow.

The last motive is a joint one: if there be "any tender-heartedness and compassions." I take it that again we must supply "in Christ." The word translated "tender-heartedness" is really bowels: it is the "abode of tender feelings." The word "bowels" does not convey this meaning to most of us, as we use the word heart instead. We know the meaning of the word "heartless"; and I suppose the ideal word would be one with the opposite meaning, while still using the word heart, but we do not seem to have such a word in English, so perhaps tender-heartedness conveys most closely the meaning of the Greek word. The word translated compassions is the manifestation of these tender-hearted feelings. Both words are in the plural: and together give us the inward spring and the outward manifestation of the Lord's tender love and care for us.

And what is the exhortation towards which these four mighty motives have been leading us? "Fill full my joy!" Was the Apostle's joy, then, not full? There is probably no book in the Bible so filled with joy as Philippians. The Apostle seems to be flowing over with joy: what is it, then, that keeps his joy from being full? We get the answer in another series of four: this time, four conditions of soul, to match, as it were, the four motivating reasons we have just considered. First: "When ye mind the same thing." Then, and not till then, will the Apostle's joy be full. Notice how many times we find this word mind. I think ten times in this Epistle. How often our mind runs in the wrong direction. How often misunderstandings come in. How often we do not mind the same thing. While we are looking on our own things (2:4), or seeking our own things (2:21) we will never be minding the same thing. In verse 27 of chapter 1 we saw how earnestly the Apostle exhorted these dear saints to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. The Apostle saw the need for this earnest appeal: and now he goes a little further, beseeching them to fill full his joy when they mind the same thing. The other three conditions for filling full his joy are very similar, and indicate that all in Philippi were not of one mind: but when we come to chapter 4, the Apostle speaks out plainly, but, oh, how gently: "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntache, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." Two dear sisters, sisters who toiled with him in the gospel, were not of one mind: and it kept the Apostle's joy from being full. And, let us ask, what about the Lord's joy in His saints? Did it hinder His tender heart from having the full joy He longed for from His own? Oh, Beloved, what about us today? I fear we must often fill His heart with grief, rather than joy. How few companies of saints do we find where they mind the same thing! Rather, how often do we find that all seek their own: all look on their own things; all mind different things. Oh, the shame and the sorrow of it, when we know it grieves the Spirit of God, and must fill our Lord's heart with sorrow.

We all know something of the exceeding difficulty of healing coldness and divisions that arise between the saints. “A brother offended is harder to be won than a fenced city.” Note the wondrous skill of the Apostle, taught by the Spirit of God: before ever he mentions the need for them to mind the same thing, he turns their eyes to Christ: “If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love.” He reminds them of that mighty bond, the “fellowship of the Spirit,” (vs. 1) and once again he looks off to Christ: “if any tenderheartedness and compassions.” It is only in Christ we will find healing for these sad rents that come between God’s people: let us, Beloved, be found “looking off unto Jesus.”

The next is: “Having the same love” (vs. 2). Love thinketh no evil. Love suffereth long and is kind. Love is not provoked. (Leave out the easily). Love never faileth. And what about those who have sinned and got away? As soon, and as quickly, as may be “confirm your love toward him” (2 Cor. 2:8).

And what comes next? “Joined in soul,” or, “knit together in soul.” We know so little about such a condition in practice, that one is ashamed to try and speak of it. We know more about being “joined in soul” through having the same hate: as we have seen the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Herodians, (all bitter enemies), having the same hate against Christ, and so joined in soul. I think it is Mr. Darby who said, “Devotedness to Jesus is the strongest bond between human hearts.” Oh, Lord Jesus, give Thy poor saints more of this devotedness to Thee! Devotedness formed by love to Jesus: devotedness caused by the love of Jesus: this devotedness that brings the “same love,” and so may we be joined in soul each to the other.

And now we come to the last of this series: “Minding the one thing!” (as Mr. Kelly rightly, and beautifully, translates it.) A little later in this Epistle we will find the Apostle telling us, “One thing I do!” The bane of the Christian’s life is that most of us are trying to do too many things; and alas, a lot of them are our own things. What is the secret of being able to take up the Apostle’s words: to be able to say: “One thing I do!” I doubt not we find it just here: We must be “minding the one thing!” And if we are all “minding the one thing,” we will all be of “one mind.”

PSALM 133

how good and how pleasant it is

for brethren to dwell together

in unity!

It is like

the precious ointment upon the head,

that ran down upon the beard,

even Aaron’s beard:

that went down to

the skirts of his garments;

As the dew of Hermon,

and as the dew that descended

upon the mountains of Zion:

for there

the Lord commanded the dressing,

even fife for evermore.

Psalms 133

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 18: Suffering for His Sake

“Because to-you has-been-given on-behalf-of Christ, not only the believing on Him, but also the suffering on-behalf-of Him; having the same sort-of struggle which ye-saw in me, and now hear-of in me.”

Philippians 1:29-30

Now let us turn to the last two verses of Philippians 1. The little word “because” links up these verses with those before. Peter tells us that we need not think it “strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter 4:12). And he goes on to say: “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:13). It is remarkable how often suffering is linked with glory and joy. And so Paul tells the saints that, “to you has been given.... the suffering on behalf of Him.” The word used here for “given,” is the one from which we get “grace”; and “denotes specially a grant of free favor.” In 1 Cor. 3:12 we find this same word: “That we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”: where this one Greek word is translated “are freely-given”. And this is a good translation. I wonder if suffering was one of the things included in this verse in Corinthians?

I think the Apostle was about to write: “To you has been given on the behalf of Christ the suffering,” linking the “given” with the “suffering.” But then he checks himself, or, the Spirit of God checks him; as he remembers there was first something else freely given: and that was “the

believing on Him" (vs. 29). The boon of suffering on His behalf is not granted, until we have first received the boon of "believing on Him" (vs. 29). Both the believing and the suffering are free gifts of His grace. You will notice that twice we find the words "on behalf of." Some tell us the second occurence is redundant or superfluous: there is nothing redundant in the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 2:13 tells us that the things the apostles spoke were "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth". This tells us that the Holy Ghost taught the apostles the very words they were to write down: and He did not write one word too many. Why, then, do we get "on behalf of Christ," and then in the same verse, referring to the same suffering, "on behalf of Him"? I think because it is

"Love that makes sorrow so sweet."

What a difference between "suffering," and "suffering on behalf of Christ!" And the Spirit would impress this on us: for this takes the sting out of the suffering. It is something like the words "unto Him," in the verse: "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp" (Heb. 13:13). "Unto Him," makes the reproach and the suffering sweet.

In the days of old the saints rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name" (Acts 5:41). Can it be that most of us suffer so little for His Name, because He counts most of us unworthy of this gift? But let us count our brethren, who are suffering for His Name, (and there are many of them just now), worthy of all honor; and let us not forget to bear them up in our prayers, as the Scriptures say: "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them" (Heb. 13:3).

When the Lord first met Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus, and three days later sent His servant Ananias to him, at that very time, He said: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My Name's sake" (Acts 9:16). He did not speak of great things he would do so much as the great things he must suffer. And if you will read with care 2 Cor. 11:23-33, you will find a most amazing list of sufferings: most of which are not even referred to in the book of Acts, in the account of his labors and suffering in preaching the gospel. Few have ever suffered as Paul suffered: so he may indeed speak of it with authority.

But there are other sufferings for His Name besides prisons, and labor camps, and being burned at the stake. I recall a story dear Mr. Heney told us when we were children: I think his own experience: a brother had been invited by an elderly lady to have some cottage meetings in her house, and a number of neighbors had come in. They were mostly good women, regular "church-goers," and probably true Christians: but they knew nothing of what it meant to be gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus alone; or to walk in separation from that which is contrary to the Word of God. One evening the verse was quoted: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). The lady who had invited her neighbors was greatly struck with this verse: and remarked, "I've been a Christian for many years, and I have never suffered any persecution.... That can only mean one thing, that is, I do not live godly in Christ Jesus." Then she turned to the lady sitting next her, and remarked: "Mrs. Johnson, I have known you for many years, and neither have you ever suffered any persecution." So she went round the circle of her friends; and all had to admit they knew nothing of persecution.

It was not many weeks after this, that this lady, for her Lord's Name's sake, withdrew from the "church" of which she had been a member for many years: and then she quickly found that she suffered plenty of persecution. We may each one do well to challenge ourselves, "Why is it that I suffer so little on behalf of Him?" Sure I am, that if we were more true and faithful to Christ, we would know more of what it means to be given on behalf of Christ, not only the believing on Him, but also the suffering on behalf of Him. And we would also know more joy in our lives, and more of the glory before us.

For unto you it is given....not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Philippians 1:29

They.... went their way....rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonored for the name. Acts 5:41(J.N.D.)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 17: Live Worthily

"Only worthily of the gospel of the Christ live-as-citizens, in-order-that whether coming and seeing you, whether being absent, I-am-hearing the (things) concerning you, that you are standing-firm in one spirit, with one soul, together-contending for-the faith of-the gospel, and not being-scared in anything by the opposing-ones, which is to-them aclear-evidence of-destruction, but of-your salvation, and this from God."

Philippians 1:27-28

In our last meditation we saw that the Apostle weighed up the question as to whether he should depart and be with Christ, which is much more better, or whether he should remain: and as it was more needful for the saints that he should remain, he knew he would do so.

"Only worthily of the gospel of the Christ live-as-citizens" (Phil. 1:27)

Verse 27 really begins a new subject: exhortations to the saints. The first exhortation is to behave in a way worthy of the gospel of Christ, and this includes steadfastness, even in the face of suffering and danger, as we shall see in the remaining verses of our chapter.

Though it is a new subject, yet the word "only," with which verse 27 begins, links it up with what goes before. "Only," whatever happens ... the one thing that really matters ... whether present or absent from you ... "only" behave worthily of the gospel of Christ. The literal meaning of the word translated "behave" is: "live-as-citizens," though it is not wrong to translate it, "behave," or, "conduct yourselves" (vs. 27). We must, however, remember that Philippi was a Roman colony, and its citizens were Roman citizens: it has been spoken of as "a colony of Rome." And the citizens were very proud of this privilege, and sought to walk worthy of it. I think the Apostle had this in mind as he wrote: and in chapter 3:20, he uses the same word, but as a noun: "Your citizenship is in Heaven." "You are a 'colony of Heaven'". The Philippian saints would readily understand the Apostle's meaning. They would know that he was not exhorting them to live worthily as citizens of Rome, or Philippi: but as citizens of Heaven.

I feel very keenly the importance of this admonition, for it is so easy to make a high profession, but not to walk worthy of the profession we make: it is so easy to say we are citizens of Heaven, but to behave as citizens of earth. In a letter from a brother this week, he remarks that hymn "Number 212 is not so comfortably sung sometimes." Number 212 begins:

I believe he is right: and it is well that these lines should challenge us, and search our inmost souls: for, how easy it is to live as if we still were “citizens of earth.”

And the Spirit of God presses home on us this need to behave in a worthy way.

“Receive her in the Lord worthily of saints”. Rom. 16:2.

“I exhort you to walk worthily of the calling.” Eph. 4:1.

“Walk worthily of the Lord”. Col. 1:10.

“Walk worthily of God” 1 Thess. 2:12: and see 3 John 6, (Margin).

How important that we walk worthily of the new relationship and position into which we have been called. When little Moses was drawn out from the waters of death, and was changed from a slave child to the son of Pharoah’s daughter; it was needful for him to walk worthily of his new position. There would be many things that were right and proper for other Israelite children to do, which he could not do: because such things would be unworthy of the king’s court, and of his adopted mother, and grandfather, the king. So is it with us. May we in very truth walk worthily of the gospel of Christ, live down here as citizens of Heaven! May we act worthily of saints: walk worthily of our calling, worthily of our Lord, worthily of God! What a high standard! Who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God.

The Apostle John could say: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). The Apostle Paul is of the same mind, as he tells us of his longing desire, “whether coming and seeing you, whether being absent, I am hearing the things concerning you, that you are standing-firm in one spirit, with one soul together contending with (or, for) the faith of the gospel.” The English word “stand” is used to translate at least seven different Greek words, each with its own shade of meaning: and in this case, “standing-firm” is an effort to bring out the special force of this particular Greek word. It is said to have the meaning of standing firm, or standing fast, and not giving ground. It is a favorite word of Paul, and has something of a military tone in it: a regiment of soldiers standing firm, and refusing to retreat. In John’s Gospel it is used twice: first of our Lord, in 1:26: “There standeth One among you, whom ye know not.” What an example of standing firm do we see as we trace the footsteps of our Lord and Savior through this world.

The second time is in 8:44: where our Lord says to the Jewish leaders: “Ye are of your father the devil.... he stood not in the truth.” What a contrast! May God help us to follow our Lord, and “stand fast.” An old brother once said to me: “All giving up is of the devil.” That is what this verse in John tells us. In 1 Cor. 16:13, we are called to “stand fast in the faith” (vs. 27); in Gal. 5:1, to “stand fast...in the liberty”; in Philippians 4:1, and 1 Thess. 3:8, to “stand fast in the Lord” (ch. 4:1). In 2 Thess. 2:15, we are to “stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught” (2 Thess. 2:15). We meet the word also in Mark 3:31 & 11:25, and Rev. 12:4: not elsewhere in the New Testament.

These uses will help us to understand the great force there is in the word in the passage before us: “standing-firm in one spirit.” Do not give ground an inch! “With one soul together-contending for the faith of the gospel.” The word “contending” is from the Greek word from which we get our English word “athlete.” To this is added another word, meaning “together,” making only one word in Greek. The thought is, I believe, of a team, like a football team; or, a regiment of soldiers, who “together-contend” in a desperate struggle. They must have one spirit and one soul: and though there may be many persons, they work together as one. This was what the Apostle wished to hear about the dear Philippian saints. I wonder what he would say if he saw us today! The marginal reading of Zeph. 3:9 is “to serve Him with one shoulder.” This illustrates Philippians 1:27: “standing firm in one spirit, with one soul, together contending for the faith of the gospel.” This seems to illustrate the thought very beautifully: may we, Beloved, know more of what it is “to serve Him with one shoulder.” In Acts 4:32, we read: “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul”. In Acts 2:46, we read of “singleness of heart” (Eph. 6:5) (Col. 3:22). We know what these passages mean: may we know also what it means “to serve Him with one shoulder!”

This is the second time we have the word “gospel” in this 27th verse: “worthily of the gospel,” “with, (or, for) the faith of the gospel” (vs. 27). (Mr. W. Kelly says it is “with the faith of the gospel,” rather than, “for the faith of the gospel”: though perhaps it may have both meanings). The gospel is looked at as contending against all the wickedness and worldliness and coldness around, and we are together to contend along with it. Dr. Vaughan puts it “sharing the contest of the faith of the gospel,” and perhaps that expresses the thought well. In 2 Tim. 1:8, we read: “Suffer evil along with the gospel.”

We need these exhortations today just as truly as the Philippian saints and Timothy needed them in days gone by. May God help us to press the battle home, to learn to “share the contest,” never to give ground, and if need-be suffer evil along with the gospel.

But there is more. We are not to be “scared in anything by the opposing ones.” The word translated “scared” is a remarkable word, and used only here in the New Testament. The original meaning is a shy, timid horse, frightened of something. In these days of motor cars, I suppose few of my readers know anything about this: but you who are older, and who have, perhaps, had experience driving such a horse, will understand exactly the Apostle’s meaning. It may be only a shadow, or the whistle of a train, or some other thing that could not possibly hurt it, as long as the driver has control: but the horse gets scared, and then it is no good for the work it is supposed to do, until it settles down again. I am reading a grand book just now: “D’Aubigne’s History of the Reformation.” My father read parts of it aloud to us children, when I was eight years old, and I still can remember the thrill of it. We see some wonderful examples of Christian courage in this book. When Luther was summoned to stand before the Council at Worms: and his friends did their utmost to persuade him not to go, as they were sure it meant death; he replied, “Even although there were as many devils at Worms as there are tiles upon the roofs, I would enter it.” Zwingli, in Switzerland, when threatened by all the civilian and ecclesiastical wrath, was asked if he was not frightened, and he replied, with noble scorn, “I dread them.... as the rock-bound shore dreads the threatening billows.... with God!” Another has said: “How depressing to the enemy is the endurance of the saints.”

It is of the utmost importance “that we should keep up in our souls good courage in face of the foe, and confidence in God, not only for our own sake but for others. There is no testimony more gracious, nor more solemn to our adversaries” (W.K.) Do you not think it was the courage and grace of Stephen that were the first links of the chain that won that terrible “opposer,” Saul of Tarsus?

“Opposing ones,” or “opposers,” is the translation of a word meaning literally, “to be set over against.” It is used of the relation between the Spirit and the flesh, in Gal. 5:17: “They are opposed one to the other.” There are many today who are opposed to the gospel. Don’t be scared

of them! Don't be frightened! When they see you are not frightened, it will be clear evidence, absolute proof, to them of destruction: but for you of the final triumph of the gospel over all the opposing ones, and over all that the opposing ones can do: and this triumph is of God, not by us. It may mean suffering, as we will, God willing, see in our next meditation: but remember there is a power that can make even suffering sweet.

Be of Good Cheer (Matt. 9:2, 22; 14:27; Mark 6:50; Luke 8:48; John 16:33; Acts 23:11).

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 16: What I Shall Choose

"For to me to live (is) Christ, and to die (is) gain. But if I live in the flesh, this (is) the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh (is) more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again"

"For to me to-live (or, to-be-living) (is) Christ, and to-have-died (is) gain. If, then, to-be-living in flesh (is my lot), this (is) for-me (the) fruit of labor: and what I-shall-choose I-do not know. But I-am-pressed by the two, having the passionate-desire to-have-departed, and to-be with Christ ... for (that is) much more better. But to-remain in the flesh (is) more necessary on-account-of you. And having-confidence-of this, I know that I-shall-remain, and shall-remain-along-with you all, to (aid) your progress and joy in the faith, in-order-that your boast may-abound in Christ Jesus through me by my presence again with you."

Philippians 1:21-26

The words translated "more better" are a double comparative: the only place in the New Testament, I believe, where such a thing is found: and I think impossible to put literally into good English.

We pondered the first part of this quotation in our last chapter: but we might look for a moment at the word "gain"— "to have died is gain." We will find the same word again in chapter 3:7; but there it is plural: all the Apostle's "gains," as he formerly reckoned them, now he counts but loss. In Titus 1:11 we read of filthy "gain." These are the only times we find this word as a noun in the New Testament: but the verb is used repeatedly. The first time is the great question of the man who should "gain" the whole world, but lose his soul. And in Philippians 3:8 the Apostle tells us why he counted his "gains" but loss: it was that he might "gain Christ."

The following portion is not easy to follow. Mr. Darby translates it: "But if to live in the flesh (is my lot), this is for me worthwhile: and what I shall choose I cannot tell." Mr. Kelly's translation is almost the same. Mr. Darby, however, gives the translation we have used above (which is the literal one) as an alternative. It seems to me a pity to lose the word "fruit" in the passage: for it almost instinctively takes our thoughts back to "the fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11) in verse 11, or to the branch abiding in the vine to bear fruit (John 15): and it takes our thoughts forward to the end of the Epistle, where he writes: "I seek fruit abounding to your account" (ch. 4:17). Fruit and labor seem to be linked together in the Scriptures, as in our passage, and again in 2 Tim. 2:6, (New Translation): "The husbandman must labor before partaking of the fruits." The thought seems to be that if the Lord should leave Paul in this scene for a time longer, he would still continue in his labor: and that labor meant fruit for his Master.

This thought may well challenge most of us. Too often we may take up the sorrowful words of the disciples of old: "We have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing" (Luke 5:5). I know that the Lord says: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:23): not: "good and successful servant." And I know that the Lord does not reckon "fruit" as we do. But, even so, I know it often comes home to me as a challenge to my own soul. Why so little fruit? And the answer may, perhaps, be found in John 15. The branch must abide in the vine if it is to bear fruit: and perhaps some of us are not abiding in the vine as we should, and as we would. How easy it is to forget our Lord's words: "Without Me, ye can do nothing" (John 15:5); and then we try to labor in our own strength: and that is worthless.

You will notice that the Apostle does not speculate on what sentence the Roman Emperor may pass on him. Rather, he weighs up the matter. Much more better to be with Christ, on the one hand: but, on the other hand, more needful for you that he abide in the flesh. And being confident of this, he decides the matter himself: "I know that I shall remain" (vs. 25). What a true shepherd's heart! Without hesitation he gives up his own wishes for the sake of the flock. Another Apostle could write, "We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). They were of one mind. May the Lord grant to us to be thus minded: to love and care for the flock of Christ, and to put it far above our own wishes or desires.

How often we are apt to think, to depart and be with Christ will be to escape the trials and anxieties and perplexities and reproach of this wilderness path: and so we think it is better to depart: but such a thought never crossed the mind of the Apostle: the attraction, on the one hand, was CHRIST: and nothing else. On the other hand, there was the need of the saints. Nor was it in any way that he put the saints before Christ: but it was for Christ's sake he would care for Christ's flock.

You will notice the Apostle does not say he had a desire "to die," but to depart and to be with Christ. The word translated depart is taken either from the breaking up of an encampment, or from loosing the cable that holds the ship to the dock. In 2 Tim. 4:6, Paul says: "The time of my departure is at hand" (2 Tim. 4:6). This is from the same word. When the time of departure has come for a great ocean liner, you will see the last cable holding it to the shore unloosed, and silently it moves away for its long journey to a distant land. And for many onboard, it is going "home" to a land they love: such is the Apostle's description of death.

In Psa. 34 we read, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad" (Psa. 34:2). Most boasting is hateful, especially to "the humble." But they are glad to hear it when we boast in the Lord: and so our passage ends with the thought of aiding the joy of the Philippian saints: and remember "joy" is almost the key-word of this Epistle. The word translated "boast" has the thought of "joyous exultation." In Philippians 3:3 we will meet the word again, but as a verb; and, if the Lord will, we will speak more fully of it then: but notice how beautifully this portion ends: "I shall remain, and shall-remain along-with you all, to aid your progress and joy in the faith, in order that your joyful exultation (or, boast) may abound in Christ Jesus, through me (or, as to me) by my presence again with you." Their joy

would produce boasting, or, joyful exultation, not in Paul, but in Christ Jesus: and though it would be caused by Paul's presence with them once again, their boast would be in Christ Jesus. Too often we find the saints of God boasting in themselves; of their own doings: but let us remember that "He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory" (John 7:18). May the Lord mercifully deliver us from all such boasting, but fill our mouths with joyful exultation in Christ Jesus!

My soul shall make her boast

in the Lord:

the humble shall hear thereof,

and be glad.

Psa. 34:2

... we... rejoice

in Christ Jesus,

and have no confidence

in the flesh.

Philippians 3:3

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 15: Life … Death

"For to me to live (is) Christ, and to have died (is) gain."

Philippians 1:21

In our last meditation we pondered the words: "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, whether by death." We recalled the emblem of the Moravian Mission ... an ox, standing between a plow and an altar: ready to honor its Master whether by service, whether by sacrifice: "whether by life, whether by death."

We will now, with the Lord's help, ponder the reason that the Apostle was satisfied with either life or death. It was no question of which was "the lesser evil," as many today feel as they ponder life and death. Life, for the Apostle, was good: "For me to live is Christ" (vs. 21). What better could he have than that? Ah, but there is better, "much more better" (Luke 12:24) than that: for ... "to die (is) gain." "To die" is to depart and be with Christ, "which is much more better." And so he was in a strait, not knowing which to choose.

But let us look at those sweet words: "For me to live Christ" (vs. 21) (as the Greek puts it). In Gal. 2 and Col. 3 the Apostle tells us that Christ is his life: "Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20); "Christ, who is our life" (Col. 3:4). These Scriptures tell us of the inner source and power of the life the Apostle lived down here day by day. But in Philippians the Spirit is not speaking of "Christ our life" (Col. 3:4), but rather of the day by day life that the Apostle lives; the outer life that others see. Not only had Paul Christ for his life, but for him to live was Christ. CHRIST was his only object: CHRIST filled his vision: CHRIST was all in all to him. We see people of the world, and of one we say: "For him to live is wealth"; or of another: "For her to live is pleasure"; or again, "For suchan-one to live is study, or power, or some other pursuit." We know this means that these things are the absorbing interests in the lives of these people, to the comparative exclusion of all else. One thing they do. So, the Apostle also could say: "One thing I do." For Paul: to live, CHRIST.

We are apt to gaze in awe and wonder at the great Apostle, feeling that such a statement, though true of him, is utterly beyond us, and not meant to apply to us at all. But you recall he tells us, not once or twice, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1; 4:16; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:7, 9). The truth is that this is just the normal, proper life of a Christian: the life that every one of us should be living. You and I can truly say: "Christ is our life" (Col. 3:4). If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. (Rom. 8:9). There is the power for me to live CHRIST.

The words, "to live," are in the present infinitive, which means the continuous, day-after-day life that the Apostle lived down here. When we go on to the other half of the verse, "and to die is gain" (vs. 21) the Spirit of God changes from the present infinitive to the aorist infinitive, which denotes one single act: "the-having died is gain." It is not "the dying" that is gain, but "the having died," (2 Cor. 5:14) for, as the Apostle points out, that is "to depart and be with Christ, which is much more better." We have walked "through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psa. 23:4) (not into the valley), and as we reach Him Whom having not seen we love: as we gaze upon Him, and for the first time "see Him as He is" (Luke 18:11): see those very wounds which redeemed us, "with joyful wonder we'll exclaim 'The half has not been told!'"

A dear friend of mine was being led by bandits outside the city in China that he had so faithfully served for many years, being led out to suffer the same violent death that was before the Apostle in our verse: a girl who knew him watched him pass, and marveled at the peace and joy stamped upon his face: at the steady, fearless walk: she exclaimed: "Are you not afraid?" (Deut. 20:3). He replied with a smile, "Afraid of what?" Yes, it is still true, "To have died is gain."

There is a superstition where I write that every three years the ocean will claim a boy and a girl: and next year they are due to be taken. Next door to us live a boy and a girl in their early 'teens', and already they are living in terror that they may be the ones chosen to die: but these children have never known Him Who "abolished death," (2 Tim. 1:10) Him Who took part of flesh and blood that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Heb. 2:14-15. How unspeakably different, whether for young or old, is death to the believer, and to the unbeliever! Bishop Moule tells of a young kinsman of his, a contemporary at Cambridge University, who had everything life could offer. In his twenty-second year he

was suddenly cut down, and when his mother came to tell him he was about to die, “in a moment, without a change of color, without a tremor, without a pause, smiling a radiant smile, he looked up and answered, ‘Well, to depart and to be with Christ is far better!’”

We might note that this Scripture completely destroys such teaching as “the sleep of the soul after death,” or the thought that man ceases to exist. For the believer we are “absent from the body: present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). The unbeliever in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torments. Never is there a suggestion in the Word of God that man, whether believer or unbeliever, ever ceases to exist; or that his soul loses consciousness at death. The Word teaches quite the contrary.

We have spoken much of death as we have meditated on this verse: Philippians 1:21: and we know it was imminently before the Apostle. He faces it squarely, but without a trace of fear: on the contrary, with joy. But let us not suppose that this blotted out the fairer and better hope of his Lord’s return. It is in this Letter that we read: “Our citizenship is in Heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21). No: Paul did not “look for” death: on the contrary, he says, “we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”; and elsewhere he exclaims: “the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1). The word translated “look for” (apekdechometha) means: “We are eagerly expecting”: but it is intensified by the first two letters: “ap”: which imply also abstraction from other objects; and absorption in the object before us. (See Lightfoot). It is present tense, a continuous, moment-by-moment, eager expectation: Paul says:

Are you???

Am I???

EAGERLY EXPECTING (Waiting to meet loved ones from home)Afar in the darkness of ChinaWe’ve labored and waited alone:We’ve longed, how we’ve longed for our brethren;Our brethren to come from our home.And now they are coming, they’re coming:Their ship will be here by the dawn!Through the darkness and coldness e’er daybreak;Oh, how I wait for the morn!I sleep, but my heart awaketh;For my well-beloved brother is near;I sleep, but my heart awaketh;For soon, Oh, joy, he’ll be here.I sleep, but my heart awaketh;Hark! ‘midst the dark do I hearThe siren announcing their coming,And the anchor-chains rattling so near?==========Afar in the darkness of this worldWe’ve labored and waited alone:We’ve longed, how we’ve longed for our Savior,To come from our long-looked for Home!And now He is coming, is coming!He says He’ll be here by the Dawn,Through the darkness and coldness e’er daybreak,Oh, how I watch for the morn!I sleep, but my heart awaketh,For my well-beloved Savior is near!I sleep, but my heart awaketh,For soon, Oh, joy, He’ll be here!I sleep, but my heart awaketh,Hark! midst the dark do I hearThe trump that announces Thy coming,To meet Thee, my Lord, in the air?

His coming

is as sure as

the Dawn.

Hosea 6:3 (Sgriac)

The night is far spent,

the day is at hand.

Rom. 13:12

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 14: My Earnest Expectation

“According to my earnest-expectation and hope, that in nothing I-shall-be-ashamed, but in all boldness, as always, now also Christ shall-be-magnified in my body, whether by-means-of life, whether by-means-of death.”

Philippians 1:20

“Earnest-expectation” is only one word in Greek. It means literally “watching (for some expected object) as with outstretched head.” This word is only used here and in Rom. 8:19: “For the earnest-expectation of the creature is-anxiously-waiting-for the revelation of the sons of God.” One writer says it means “to expect on and on, to the end” (Cremer). But you must picture the aged Apostle in his Roman prison, his head outstretched with longing expectation. Our English cannot say it: you must picture him in your mind: and for what is his “longing-expectation”? “That in nothing I shall be ashamed” (vs. 20). He would neither be shamed into cowardice or compromise, nor would he be shamed by failure of disappointment. Once before he had written: or, rather, “The Scripture saith” (1 Tim. 5:18) ... “Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed” (Rom. 10:11). And sure I am that Paul’s Master did not fail his “earnest-expectation,” (vs. 20) nor, his “hope.”

Once before he had exclaimed, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). Perhaps the reader is feeling, with the writer “Too often have I been ashamed of the gospel: too often have I forgotten that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation.” Perhaps we have not had the same “earnest-expectation and hope” (vs. 20) that the Apostle had, or we might not have such sad regrets: for, sad to say, there are some who will be ashamed before Him at His coming. (1 John 2:28). This will be at the judgment seat of Christ, when we will see all our pathway down here as through His eyes. And what is the secret for us now, that then we shall not be ashamed? Only this: “And now, little children, abide in Him!” (1 John 2:28). That is all. And yet, even amidst our shame, it seems there is a gleam of comfort: for, listen: “Until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Cor. 4:5). How wonderful! I take it, there will not be one of the Lord’s own people standing before Him at that judgment seat, for whom He will not have some word of praise.

You remember the mother who sat mending her little daughter’s dress, sad and discouraged, as she viewed all the failure in her efforts to serve her Lord: all seemed so hopelessly bad ...

“According to my earnest-expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but in all boldness of utterance, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by means of life, whether by means of death.”

We must now ponder the words “in all boldness” (vs. 20). The original word properly means “frankness of speech arising from freedom of heart,” and it goes well with the words that follow: “Christ shall be magnified” (vs. 20). We find the same word in Eph. 6:19. The Apostle asks prayer.... “on behalf of me, in order that a word may be given to me, in (the) opening of my mouth, in boldness of utterance, to make known the mystery of the glad tidings.” This Scripture uses the word entirely in its own original meaning, but the Apostle in Philippians seems to go further: he would have a boldness that gives utter and absolute devotion to Christ for life, for death. It is not uncommon for our Apostle to enlarge the meaning of words, and for his thoughts to rise above their ordinary, earthly interpretation. May it be given to us more and more to follow him in this absolute devotion to Christ.

What a word is this: “Christ shall be magnified!” (vs. 20). The Apostle does not say: “That I may magnify Christ.” It is in the passive voice. The instrument is forgotten. Notice also that he does not say, “that Christ shall be magnified in my life, or, in my soul.” Mary had used the very same word in Luke 1:46: “My soul Both magnify the Lord.” But the Apostle’s longing is that Christ shall be magnified in his body.

And he himself tells us that his enemies said: “His bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible” (2 Cor. 10:10). But it was not Paul, nor Paul’s body, that was to be magnified: it was Paul’s Lord. It is, I think, like the lens in the telescope, by which some distant star in the heavens “is magnified.” It does not make the star any greater: but it manifests in some small degree the greatness of that star. The telescope and the lens are forgotten: and the star fills the vision. So Paul would have it to be in his body. So would you, Beloved! So would I! May God grant it, for His name’s sake!

In Acts 10:46 Cornelius and his kinsfolk and near friends magnified God, when first they heard the gospel from Peter’s lips, and the Holy Spirit came upon them. In Acts 19:17 the name of the Lord was magnified in Ephesus: it was manifested to be great and mighty. And Christ may still be magnified today, in the body of the humblest and weakest believer: for His strength is made perfect in weakness. Christ may be magnified with praise, prayer, and witness to Himself: Christ may be magnified by hands, perhaps worn with labor like the Apostle’s in Acts 20:34, hands that work so willingly for Him and His:

Yes, Christ may be magnified even in our daily work in the house, or shop, or office, or the care of the children, just as truly as by the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things: any feet that “run in the way of His commandments,” magnify Him. “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together” (Psa. 34:3).

The Apostle was writing from prison: his trial yet before him: and it might be life and liberty: or, it might be death. To the beloved Apostle it matters not: so long as Christ be magnified: “whether by means of life, whether by means of death.” The emblem of the Moravian Mission is an ox standing between a plow and an altar: ready for either: ready for labor or sacrifice: ready for life or death. I sadly fear, Beloved, there is too little of this spirit among us. I sadly fear it may more truly be said: “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (ch. 2:21). Let us remember that he that loveth his life shall lose it. (John 12:25). Let us ponder on our knees such Scriptures as Matt. 10:38, 39: “He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.” Mark 8:34-35: “Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it” (Luke 9:23). “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it.” May the Lord give these words to be living and powerful in our hearts, and then we, like Paul, will “reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

Someone has said: “‘CHRIST shall be magnified.’ Print that in large letters as your ideal of Christian life,” “Whether through life, whether through death.” Paul said: “We make it our ambition, whether in our home or away, to please Him” (2 Cor. 5:9). (Weymouth: fairly literal).

... as always, so now also

CHRIST

Shall be magnified

in my body, whether it be

by life or by death

Philippians 1:20.

For to me to live

is CHRIST

and to die

is gain.

Philippians 1:21.

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 13: Salvation Through Supplication

“For I-know that this shall-turn-out for-me unto salvation, through your supplication, and abundant-supply of-the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

Philippians 1:19

As we have seen, the Apostle had once written: “We do know that all things work together for good to them that love God”: and now he writes: “I know that this shall turn out for me unto salvation.” What an unspeakable blessing is this positive certainty of the Apostle: and we may have the same certainty, for we have the same God. There are various words, with various shades of meaning, used in the Greek New Testament for our word “know.” The word used in both the above cases is one that means “to know by reflection: a mental process based on intuition, or information.” Was not the “intuition” that gave Paul this absolute certainty, the voice of the Spirit? But in this case there was more. The word translated “turn out” is used in one other instance in the New Testament in just this sense: that is in Luke 21:13, where the Lord Himself tells His disciples that when men lay their hands on them, and deliver them up to synagogues and prisons, “it shall turn out to you for a testimony” (Luke 21:13). You will recall how much Luke was with Paul, and we may suppose he had told him of these words of our Lord Jesus: so, if that be the case, Paul had also the Lord’s own words on which to rest for this certainty of which he speaks. And what a blessed certainty His words are!

“This shall turn out unto me for salvation.” Salvation is looked at in various ways in the New Testament. In 2 Timothy 1:9, we read: “Who hath saved us.” In Eph. 2:5, 8, we read: “By grace ye are saved” (Eph. 2:5). In these instances we see salvation as a thing already passed: and this is true. Thank God, I may say: “I know I am saved.” But salvation is also looked at as future, as in Rom. 13:11, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” Or, 1 Thess. 5:8: “For an helmet, the hope of salvation.” In Hebrews, salvation is, I think, always looked at as future: and in Philippians 1:28 and 2:12, it is also looked at as future. In the verse before us, it seems to include the preservation all along the way, to the very end, when we will enjoy the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23), which is future; as well as of our souls (1 Peter 1:18), which is past. I think it includes being preserved to “continue with you all,” (vs. 25) (verse 25), victorious over every difficulty, right on till he is presented, risen, faultless before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy. (Jude 24). I think these are the only times salvation is mentioned in the Epistle.

“I know that this shall turn out for me unto salvation, through your supplication, and abundant-supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” There are various words used in the Greek New Testament for “prayer,” and this is one of the strongest: it expresses the urgency of the need, and the sense of it in the minds of the dear Philippian saints. You recall the prayer meeting for Peter in the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, (Acts 12). What supplications must have gone up that evening! James, the leader of the assembly at Jerusalem, was absent; they may have been only a company of poor, unknown saints; and they do not seem to have had a great deal of faith: but may it not have been through their supplication, and the abundant-supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that what looked like certain death for Peter turned out for him unto salvation. And I do not think they were so different to us: I like to think of that company in Mary’s house: as far as I know we only know the names of two, or perhaps three Rhoda, the damsel who went to open the door for him; and probably John Mark. Both may have been little more than children: certainly “young people.” What an encouragement for my young readers to attend the prayer meetings! Mark’s mother, Mary, may have been there also. And the prayer meetings in Philippi for Paul may have been very much the same: perhaps the jailor and Lydia; maybe the girl from whom the demon was cast out; and, until he went to Rome, likely Epaphroditus: people just like ourselves, of like passions as we are (James 5:17), but it was through their supplications, and the abundant-supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, that Paul counted on his “salvation.”

The Apostle set great store by prayer. We will find he asks for the prayers of every one of the assemblies that he addresses (also prayer is asked in Hebrews), except Philippi: because he did not need to ask: and Galatia, for they were not in a fit state for such service.

And we are always wondering, wondering, how? Because we do not see Someone unknown, perhaps, and far away, On bended knee.

So, may I add here, on our behalf: “Brethren, pray for us!” (1 Thess. 5:25).

In the Greek New Testament there is a peculiarity in this sentence. The little word “the” comes before “supplication”: literally it is something like this: “the supplication of you” (2 Cor. 9:14): but there is no word “the” before “abundant-supply,” (ch. 4:19) though in English we really need it there. In Greek the one word “the” applies to both, and in this way links together the “supplication” with the answer, which is the “abundant-supply of the Spirit.” So sure is the Apostle of the answer that he can speak of it in the same breath with the prayer. In Philippians 3:10 we will find “the power of His resurrection, and fellowship of His sufferings” (ch. 3:10) linked together in the same way.

The answer to the supplication was the “abundant-supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” The words “abundant-supply” (ch. 4:19) represent one word only in Greek: and for this reason we have put a hyphen between them. I am not quite certain that it is entirely fair to translate it in this way: but I think it is. The Greek word is “epi-choreegia.” The noun is only used here and in Eph. 4:16, though the verb is used more often. They are borrowed from a well-known Greek custom, by which wealthy citizens would undertake certain public services, such as dramatic performances. A wealthy man would provide “abundant and lavish supplies.” The word lost its original connection, and came to mean simply “supply,” but especially “an abundant supply.” How suitable is this thought to the supplies which the Lord gives! I have counted seven times in the New Testament where this word, or the corresponding verb, is used of abundant supplies from God.

I cannot resist linking this with the father’s house as seen in Luke 15:25. The word there translated “dancing,” is the plural of “choros” (from which we get our word “chorus”); and it means “a choir; or, a band of singers.” (See Moulton & Milligan). Such was the joy of the father’s heart at receiving back his son, who was lost and is found, that he must have an abundant, lavish supply of singers: not one band, but “bands of singers,” gathered to sound forth `the Welcome Home!’ This word is from the very same root as the word the Apostle uses for the “abundant-supply” (ch. 4:19) sent in answer to the supplication: and, to me, it links the lavish supplies of the Father’s House, with the prison at Rome. And the same abundant, lavish supplies are still at hand, undiminished, for you and for me.

“The Spirit of Jesus Christ” (vs. 19). As far as I know, this is the only place in the New Testament where we find this expression. We find “the Spirit of Jesus,” (vs. 19) in Acts 16:7 (New Translation), for this is the correct translation. We find “the Spirit of Christ” (vs. 19) in Rom. 8:9 & 1 Peter 1:11. The Spirit of God surely has a special purpose in the use of this remarkable expression, “The Spirit of Jesus Christ” (vs. 19).

We have seen that salvation is looked at in various aspects in the Scriptures: and in Philippians it appears to be seen as the power that carries us through our pathway in this world, right on to the Home in glory: but especially for our pathway down here. In Ephesians we are “in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 2:6). In Colossians we have a Head in Heaven, and we, the members, are on earth looking forward to the time when we shall soon be with Him: (Col. 1:13-19; 3:14). But in Philippians it is rather different: we are passing through the world: the world is unchanged, but we are changed: and though it is given us here, not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for His sake, we have a new power (through His grace), even the Spirit of God: and the Holy Spirit is presented to the Philippian saints as “the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (vs.

19).

The precious name of Jesus tells us of the lowly, humble Man on earth: this is the name of the Babe in the manger: in weakness and rejection. But in this Epistle it is also the name that is exalted to the highest place of honor: it is at the name of “JESUS” that every knee shall bow. The name, or title, “Christ,” means “the Anointed One”: it is the Greek for the Hebrew title, “Messiah.” It is His official title or name. It tells of His exaltation, as well as of His office. We have already briefly pondered our Lord’s names in this Epistle: so will not speak of them here: but we may notice that three times we find His names, “JESUS CHRIST,” in this order: and alone, without His title of Lord.

The Spirit of God is alluded to in many ways in the New Testament, but those lovely words, “the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” (vs. 19) seem to take us back to the gospels: and remind us of that blessed Man Who has been here a pilgrim and a stranger: “an outcast” (Jer. 30:17); “despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3). He has already trodden the path of faith down here; He has been tempted in all points, like as we are, sin apart: and all in the unhindered power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God. He was the true Meat Offering, mingled with oil, and anointed with oil. (Lev. 2:5-6). Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit: and “mingled with oil” (Num. 29:14) tells of His birth by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35): and “anointed with oil,” (Heb. 1:9) would tell of the Spirit coming upon Him at His baptism (Mark 1:10). When the Good Samaritan saved the poor man who had fallen among thieves, he “set him on his own beast” (Luke 10:34). The Good Samaritan tells us of the Lord Jesus, and He gave the poor man the same power to carry him along the road, that He Himself had. And he pours oil, as well as wine, into his wounds. The names: “JESUS CHRIST” tell us of all this: but also takes us on, and up, to the glory, where Christ, the Anointed One, makes intercession for us. (Rom. 8:34).

And so “the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” (vs. 19) telling us of the power that carried Him through this world, is exactly what we need to carry us through this world, with all its trials, perplexities, and dangers: and to bring us safe home to the Father’s House. And this power is there for us: not only a supply, but an `abundant-supply.’

In chapter 1:11 we have His name again in the same order: “Jesus Christ”: “being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (vs. 11). If we walk through this world in the power of “the Spirit of Jesus Christ,” (vs. 19) we may be sure that the “fruit of righteousness” (vs. 11) will abound to the glory and praise of God.

The third occasion on which we find this name is when every tongue shall confess Him Lord. How peculiarly fitting it is that again we find His name in this order. It is JESUS CHRIST Whom all will own as LORD: it is the same One Who once wandered here the pilgrim, the stranger, the outcast, the despised, the rejected One: He it is, Himself, Whom every tongue shall confess as LORD.

==========

JESUS ...

“Both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

TO THE SAINTS AT ROME

“Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Rom. 15:30).

TO THE SAINTS AT CORINTH

“Who delivered us.... and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us; ye also helping together by prayer for us.” (2 Cor. 1:10-11)

TO THE SAINTS AT EPHESUS

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me” (Eph. 6:18-19).

TO THE SAINTS AT COLOSSE

“Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ” (Col. 4:2-3).

TO THE SAINTS AT THESSALONICA

“Brethren, pray for us” (1 Thess. 5:25).

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified” (2 Thess. 3:1).

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 12: Preaching Christ: From Envy Or From Love?

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”

“Some, on-the-one hand, even for envy and strife, but some, on-the-other hand, also for goodwill preach the Christ: these indeed out of-love, knowing that I-am-set for (the) defense of-the gospel, but those out of-rivalry proclaim the Christ, not purely, supposing to-arouse (or stir-up) tribulation for-my bonds. What then? Notwithstanding, in-every way, whether in-pretense or in-truth, Christ is-proclaimed, and in this I-rejoice, yea, also I-will-rejoice.”

Philippians 1:15-18

We have seen that Paul's imprisonment turned out rather for the furtherance of the gospel. "His very imprisonment preached Christ." But, alas, some indeed preached Christ even of envy and strife. The word for "strife" really means "partisanship," or "rivalry": "faction, party-spirit, intrigue" all belong to this word. Perhaps it is hard to imagine how anybody could do that: and yet, I grieve to say, we find the same thing very often today. On the mission field we find one mission trying to get ahead of another: we find vast areas in black, heathen darkness because some human society claims this as their private domain: and other servants of the Lord cannot find an entry there to preach the gospel. Nor need we go so far from home: even amongst the saints of God at home, who love the Savior and preach the gospel, we have seen rivalry, emulation, and party-spirit come in. How often, especially perhaps in a large meeting like a conference, where a number of the Lord's servants are gathered together, do we see rivalry come in: we see one or another following in the steps of Diotrephes, and loving to have the preeminence: and friction and bitterness is often the result. I have heard it said, when a number of servants of the Lord were available to preach the gospel, "We must ask So-and-So, as he would be hurt, if we did not." What is this, but preaching the gospel from envy and strife? Sad is it indeed that such things can creep in: but our hearts are no better than the hearts of the saints at Rome, in the days of Paul: and well we need to take heed to these gentle admonitions in the Word.

Some have thought that the persons acting in this way were the same sort of persons as those who preached the law to the Galatians; but surely the Apostle would never have called such preaching "the gospel," when he tells us that it is a "different gospel, which is not another." What those men in Galatia preached was no gospel at all: these men, on the other hand, "preached Christ" (Rom. 15:19). Paul could utter a curse, twice repeated, on those: over these he could rejoice. And so we must conclude that it was true gospel, preached by untrue men, or, in an untrue way. Dear Mr. Lavington once said: "May the Lord help us to see that the keynote for the Christian, is the place that the gospel has in our hearts and in our witness! And that, as the Apostle says, 'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.' (1 Cor. 9:16). The Lord help us to be more faithful, and rise to our privileges and responsibility."

But we can be thankful indeed, that amongst those dear saints at Rome, there were also those who preached Christ of "good will." The better Greek reading reverses the order of verses 16 and 17, as in the New Translation, so the description of those who preached of good will, follows immediately, and it is a joy to see they preached out of love, and it is the stronger word for love, not merely affection. The Apostle had once said, "The love of Christ constraineth me." And now it is love constrains these Roman saints to preach Christ. May we not suppose that little word "love" includes the love of Christ, love for Christ, and love for the Apostle? I doubt not that all were combined in the constraint that compelled them to preach Christ. And love is the only true motive for preaching the gospel. It must be no cold duty, to be performed every so often: but a burning love that comes from the heart. The story is told of a little Christian servant girl, who worked for an infidel. Many a true Christian had reasoned with him as to his views, without effect. This girl was greatly troubled for her master, for she loved him. One day in his presence, she could control herself no longer, and burst into tears. He asked what was the matter, and she could only sob out, that she was so concerned about his soul: and this led him to Christ. And so it was out of love the Roman saints "heralded the Christ," for so it is literally: and then the Apostle changes the word, and tells us they "proclaimed the Christ."

The ones who preached the Christ out of love, knew that the Apostle was set for the defense of the gospel: and the ones who preached out of rivalry, supposed to raise up tribulation for his bonds. "Set for the defense of the gospel" has the thought of a soldier who is posted in a certain position to defend it. The Captain of Salvation had posted Paul in a Roman prison for the defense of the gospel; and Paul could well rejoice even in such a post: it was his Captain's doing; and it was for the defense of the gospel. You remember that back in the 7th verse, we read again about the defense of the gospel, and the share in that defense that the Philippian saints had. And now the Roman saints are having a share in it also. In our Authorized Version we read that the other preachers supposed "to add affliction" (vs. 16) to his bonds. The better reading is to, "arouse," or "raise up," or "stir up" affliction. Their thought seems to have been (from the word used) that they supposed there would be "a tightening of the chain" that bound Paul. And what is Paul's answer to such a cruel motive? Oh, grand answer! "What then?" he asks, "Notwithstanding, or, at any rate, in every way, whether in pretense, or whether in truth, CHRIST IS PROCLAIMED; and in this I rejoice; yea, also I will rejoice." What a magnificent answer! What can the enemy do with such a man as that? Truly the joy of the Lord is his strength. He was, in very truth, glorying in tribulation, as once he had written to the saints at Rome. It is told of Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople long ago, that he died repeating his favorite words: "Glory be to God for all events!" He was of the same spirit as Paul. May you and I, Beloved, have a portion of that spirit: it comes from an implicit faith in our Lord, and a single eye for Him and His gospel.

...the glorious gospel

Of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. 1 Tim. 1:11

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 11: Bonds in Christ

"But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things (which happened) unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other (places); and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear".

"But I-wish you to-know, brothers, that the-(things) concerning me have-turned-out rather to (the) furtherance of-the glad tidings, so-that my bonds have-become manifest in Christ in (the) whole-of the Praetorium, and to-all the rest, and the most of-the brothers in (the) Lord being-confident by-my bonds, more-abundantly dare to-speak the word fearlessly."

Philippians 1:12-14

Verses 1 to 11 have formed a sort of introduction to the Apostle's letter to his beloved brethren in Philippi: an introduction that has breathed out his intense love for them, and his joy and confidence in them. With verse 12 we begin a new subject, even his own condition in Rome. It is experience we have brought before us now, rather than doctrine: and let us remember these lines were written, not merely for the beloved saints in Philippi, but for our sakes also they were written: nor were they written merely to satisfy curiosity as to Paul's condition, and the condition of the gospel at that time: but there are precious, hidden lessons in these words for each one of us.

It would be only natural for the saints to assume that now the great Apostle of the Gentiles is silenced and in prison, that the glad tidings (which had been committed to his trust) would suffer. So the very first thing the Apostle tells them, is that this is not the case: instead, “the things concerning me have turned out rather to the furtherance of the glad tidings.” That little word rather seems to say, “Contrary to what might be expected.” Instead of the Apostle’s captivity hindering the glad tidings, it has helped them, it has advanced them, it tells of progress rather than failure. What comfort this may bring to our hearts in these days, when we seem to see the enemy gaining victories on so many fronts: the doors for the gospel closed in China, and other lands, and many of the Lord’s true-hearted servants in prisons or labor-camps. Doubtless the enemy of souls rejoices that he has won a mighty victory. But the verses before us may fill our hearts with peace; for the Captain of our salvation is still the same: He has never lost a battle, and He never will: and the day will come when we, too, will rejoice to see that the things that are happening in China, and other lands, will turn out to the furtherance of the glad tidings. Paul had written to the saints in Rome, (not many years before), saying: “We do know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” (See New Translation; Rom. 8:28). Now he is giving them a practical demonstration that what he had written to them is really true. And that precious verse is still true: you and I may rest upon it without fear: as we read on we will see that the Apostle still held to it, even when only too manifest that the flesh had come in. “All things” with the Apostle really meant “ALL THINGS,” even though we may be slow to believe it.

And how could Paul’s imprisonment turn out to the furtherance of the glad tidings? In two ways. First, that very imprisonment meant that for 24 hours a day the Apostle was bound with a chain to a Roman soldier who could not leave him, even if he wished to. The Apostle’s right arm was chained to the soldier’s left, with a “coupling-chain,” or, “handcuff,” and as the guards were changed, day by day, many a soldier would hear the gospel from Paul’s lips, “so that my bonds have become manifest in Christ in the whole of the Pretorium.” It is not quite certain what is meant by the “Pretorium.” Probably not the imperial palace, as our English version would suggest, but rather it almost surely means the great “Imperial Guard,” who were quartered in a fortified camp, on the east side of Rome. It is said to have consisted of 10,000 picked men, all of Italian birth. As each guard returned to the barracks after his spell of duty, he would tell his comrades of the strange prisoner he had been watching that day: not a criminal: not a political prisoner: but a prisoner solely for Christ’s sake: so his bonds became manifest to all, to the whole Camp, as “in Christ.”

Through the mercy of God, you and I are not bound to anyone with a coupling-chain, but we are daily brought into contact with many. We go to school, or to the shop, or office, we do our shopping, the baker calls or the postman: I wonder is it manifest to each that we belong to Christ? Are these daily contacts for the furtherance of the glad tidings? Were Paul in our place, they surely would be. God may use even a child for this work. I recall a boy of 12 or 14 who was used to lead a man to Christ, by giving him a tract each time he left his films to be developed: at first the man laughed at him, but he told me himself, that child was really the means of winning him to Christ: and after he was won, he used to open his shop in the evenings for gospel meetings, and who knows how many others were won?

But the Pretorium guards were not the only ones to hear the glad tidings from Paul’s lips. He adds these brief, but comprehensive words: “And all the rest” (Luke 24:9). We might suppose this means all the rest of the city of Rome also came to know of his bonds, and the cause of them: and you will recall Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concerned the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. (Acts 28:30-31). So it is evident that without going out of his house, he had a very wide circle of service. But we also know that “all the rest” included even more than Rome: for we know of a run-away slave, perhaps from Colosse: a “useless” slave, we know; who was blessed in that hired house. (Philem. 1:10-11: etc. See Bagster’s New Interlinear Greek New Testament).

But there was another, and much more unexpected way in which the Apostle’s imprisonment had turned to the furtherance of the glad tidings. I doubt not the great enemy had thought when he got Paul imprisoned, that then the less bold would fear to take a stand, or speak for Christ, in case it brought them like troubles. The exact opposite was the result. The Apostle writes: “And the most of the brothers in the Lord, being confident by my bonds, more abundantly dare to speak the Word fearlessly” (Verse 14). There is nothing stirs the hearts of true servants of Christ to fervor and boldness, like a fervent, fearless, bold servant of Christ, who is ready to suffer for his Master. How often have those who have witnessed the death of a martyr, become followers of the martyr, and of his Master! Indeed the word “martyr” is merely the Greek word for a “witness.” In suffering and death, many a martyr has borne a more powerful witness to Christ, than ever he could by his life. May it not have been the fervent, fearless martyr Stephen who was the first link in the chain that caused Paul to be the bold and fearless witness for Christ that he afterward became.

Our Lord does not offer us an easy pathway down here: on the contrary he says: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, (say ‘No’ to himself), and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Luke 9:23) (Matt. 16:24). He says again, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). And again: “Suffer evil along with the glad tidings” (2 Tim. 1:8: New Translation). It is not the sight of Christians living in ease and luxury that stirs the heart to follow Christ, to be confident, and to more abundantly dare speak the Word fearlessly. No, it is the fearless servant of Christ, who for Christ’s sake is ready to suffer for the One he loves and follows; it is such a one who stirs my heart to go and do likewise. And this was the unexpected result of Paul’s chain. Instead of one mouth to tell the story, now “most of the brothers” are telling out the glad tidings.

It has always been the same. The first British martyr was Alban. He was a pagan, but by nature a kindly man, and sheltered a Christian named Amphibalus, who was being pursued. His contact with this Christian made a deep impression on him, and when finally the officers found where he was hiding, Alban changed clothes with him, in order to protect him. He was himself carried before the Governor, who commanded him to sacrifice to the idols. The brave Alban replied he was a Christian, and could not. The Governor first scourged, and then beheaded him. The venerable Bede states that the executioner, beholding, suddenly accepted Christ himself, and entreated permission either to die in Alban’s place, or else to die with him. Both were beheaded by a soldier on the 22nd of June, 287, at Verulam, now St. Alban’s. Many more similar instances might be quoted. See Foxe’s Book of Martyrs.

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 10: His Longing and His Prayer

“For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent,. That ye may be sincere and without offense till the

day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

"For God (is) my witness how I-passionately long-after you all in (the) heart of Christ Jesus. And this I-pray, That your love yet more and more may-overflow in intimate-knowledge and in-all perception, To-the-end ye may-test-and-approve the-(things) more-excellent, That ye-may-be sincere and without-stumbling for Christ's day, Having-been-filled-with (the) fruit of-righteousness, by-means-of Jesus Christ, to God's glory and praise."

Philippians 1:8-11

"For God is my witness how I passionately long after you all in the heart of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:8)

In our last chapter we saw that Paul had the Philippian saints in his heart, and they had Paul in their hearts. Now he speaks again of this longing for these saints. The ordinary Greek word for longing is never used in the New Testament, but a preposition is added to it, that gives the idea of "straining after" the object longed for. One writer translates it "yearning," another speaks of it as "homesick longing." In the New Testament, I think the word is always used in a good sense. Paul passionately longed to see the Roman saints (Rom. 1:11 & 15:23); we passionately long (ardently desire, J.N.D.) to be clothed with our house which is from heaven (2 Cor. 5:2); the poor saints passionately longed for those who had shown them loving care (2 Cor. 9:14); Epaphroditus passionately longed for his Philippian brethren, because they had heard that he was sick, and were troubled (Phil. 2:26). In chapter 4:1 Paul speaks of the Philippian saints as, "My brethren, beloved and passionately longed for, my joy, and crown." The Thessalonian saints passionately longed to see Paul (1 Thess. 3:6);

Paul, in the dungeon at Rome, passionately longed to see Timothy (2 Tim. 1:4). The Spirit of God passionately longs over the saints (James 4:5); and we are to passionately long for the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2).

Christians are sometimes accused of being enthusiasts; but when we remember the New Testament never uses the moderate word for longing, and so often uses the more intense one, we may see that it is right for us to be enthusiasts in right ways.

Now notice, "In Whose heart is this passionate longing for the saints?" "I passionately long after you in the heart of Christ Jesus." In verse 7, Paul had the Philippian saints in his heart. Now it is as though he said: "Nay, rather, in the heart of Christ Jesus I passionately long for you." (The word for heart is different, but almost interchangeable). An old writer has said, "In Paul, Paul did not live, but Jesus Christ." Gal. 2:20 tells us the same thing. But does not this verse give us a glimpse into the heart of Christ Himself, as He passionately longs over us, those He purchased with His own blood?

Beloved, is there no lesson for us in this little verse? Would that our longing for one another were more passionate. Then we would be found (as the Apostle is found in the next verse) much more in earnest prayer for each other. It was Paul's passionate longing for the Philippians that drew forth that fervent prayer. May we each one be more enthusiasts in our longing for one another. Nor let us forget that we are exhorted to be passionately longing for the sincere milk of the Word that we may grow thereby: and this, I think, we will see is suggested in the next verse in our chapter.

A passionate longing for anyone, soon causes us to pray for that one, and so immediately the Apostle adds, "And this I pray, (or, I am praying), in order that your love may yet more and more overflow in intimate knowledge and in all perception, to the end ye may approve the things that are excellent, (or, discriminate the things that differ), that ye may be clear and without stumbling for Christ's day, being filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is through Jesus Christ, to God's glory and praise" (Phil. 1:9-11). In the 4th verse the Apostle had already said he was "always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all, making the supplication with joy." Now, in the verses before us, he tells the saints what the objects of those supplications were. We will see there were four chief requests: That their love might abound yet more and more. That they may have the grace of discernment, able to test things which differ.

That they might be sincere and without offense. That they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness.

We will now, with the Lord's help, seek to ponder these requests. Notice well that love is the foundation of all. Without love we are but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. When the church at Ephesus had left her first love, she was a fallen church. Discernment, the ability to test things which differ, would be worthless without love. And the Apostle prays that their love might abound yet more and more. Living love must grow; and a love that does not grow and increase is probably a dead and worthless love: or, at least, a diseased and unhealthy love. And notice it is not spoken of as a certain definite love: as love to God, or love to Christ, or to the Apostle himself, or to other saints, or even love of the Word and prayer. It is love in general, and doubtless takes in all these. You may have noticed that the true reading of 1 John 4:19, is, "We love, because He first loved us." You may feel, as I did, disappointed at the old familiar words being changed: and these old, well-loved words are certainly true: we do love Him, because He first loved us: but the true reading includes the old words we all love so much, but it takes in much more. It is a general, absolute love: love to "Him" and love to one another: love of the Word, and love of prayer, are all included. So it is here in our verse in Philippians, I believe. And the only way for that love to increase yet more and more, is to know more and more of His love to us: it is to keep ourselves in the sunshine of His love: it is not by examining our love to see how much we have: it is not by trying to love more: but it is just to take Him at His word when He tells us how much He loves us, and to bask in the sunshine of His love:

But it is not to be a blind love: rather it is to be a love in intimate knowledge and in all perception. The Spirit of God does not use the ordinary word for "knowledge," but adds a preposition to it, which gives the meaning of a deep, true, spiritual knowledge, as distinguished from superficial, or merely intellectual knowledge. We get the two words beautifully distinguished in 1 Cor. 13:12: "Now I know in part, but then I-shall-intimately-know just as also I-am-intimately-known." (The words with hyphens are only one word in Greek: "I-shall-intimately-know," is in the middle voice, so has the thought, "I shall know for myself.") The contrast of the two words is that of Job 42:5: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." Let us notice that this prayer in Philippians tells us that the Spirit of God would have us even now, down here, to have something of that "intimate knowledge" that we will have in its fullness up there, when we see Him as He is, and know Him as we are known. We find a very similar prayer, using this same word, in Eph. 1:17.

Linked with this intimate knowledge, that only love can give, is another rare and beautiful grace ... "all perception." The word for "perception" is only used here in the Greek New Testament: though words from the same root are found in Luke 9:45 and Heb. 5:14. The idea of the word is an apprehension by the senses. Christians receive, as it were, a new sense, as of touch or taste, by which they discriminate the properties of things proposed to them for thought or action. It is this sense of perception that makes even a lamb of the flock "know My voice," as the

Good Shepherd says, “and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:5). But it is as we keep close to the Shepherd, and listen to His voice, that we unconsciously cultivate this sense of perception; and the reason the lamb or the sheep keeps close to the Shepherd is because it loves Him. I have known a mother and child who were devoted to each other, with whom this sense of perception had truly become another “sense,” as touch or taste, so that it was unnecessary for either to speak: a look, a smile, a touch of the hand, and the one would know the inmost heart of the other: it was love taught them. It was not by trying, but it was love that made them so near to each other, that the perception came naturally, if we may so speak.

So may it be with divine love that abounds yet more and more. It is this rare grace of perception that gives us to be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. One good translator puts it this way: “in clear knowledge and keen perception.” And love is the foundation of all. It is no true proof of love, either to God, or to the children of God, when we are content to go on with what is displeasing to God, out of “love to His children,” as we are apt to say. Ponder well 1 John 5:1-5. This is not love in intimate knowledge and perception.

As we have said, the word for “perception” is a very rare word; and perhaps this suggests that the grace described by it is also very rare. The men of Issachar, who had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do, (1 Chron. 12:32), seem to have had this grace. “All the proud men” (Jer. 43:2) of Jer. 43:2 are examples of those who were utterly devoid of it: for pride and perception cannot exist together. “The meek will He guide in judgment: the meek will He teach His way” (Psa. 25:9).

“That ye may approve things that are excellent,” (vs. 10) may equally well be translated, “That ye may discriminate things that differ.” In other Scriptures, the words used here are translated in both ways. The meaning is really the same. They have learned to “take forth the precious from the vile” (Jer. 15:19). With a Christian, to discriminate things that differ, is to approve things that are excellent. Strange and sad it is that this grace should be so rare. How few there are to whom one may go in perplexity, and know one will be welcomed with understanding love, and will receive true and sound counsel. I fear it is that we do not keep close enough to the Good Shepherd to have cultivated this grace. The Apostle could cry, “That I may know Him!” (ch. 3:10). How well he knew Him, but the better we know, the more earnestly we long to know more intimately. The more true intelligence there is, the greater the desire to grow in it: but it is for daily use in the things we meet moment by moment. And this Epistle shows us spiritual progress more fully than any other, while it is this Epistle that shows us the strongest desire to press on. We know from experience whenever we begin to be satisfied with what we have got, there is an end of progress: but when we make a little advance, then we long to make more.

The third request is: “That ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” Let us notice those first words: “that ye may be.” Remember this follows the prayer for discernment, to test things which differ: to approve things that are excellent. There must be a practical result follow from this occupation with the excellent things: they should produce character and conduct. It has been said that to be a Christian is “to be, to do, to suffer.” But first is the necessity, “that ye may be.” And what are we to be? We are to be, first of all, sincere. There is no word in the English language that can fully bring out the meaning of the Greek word that “sincere” seeks to translate. Probably “sincere” is the best to be found. The Greek word signifies properly what is “distinct,” “unmixed.” It is only found in the New Testament in this Scripture and in 2 Peter 3:1. A word formed from it is found in 1 Cor. 5:8; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2:17. Its derivation is uncertain. Some think it is from a word meaning “that which is cleansed by much rolling and shaking to and fro, in the sieve.” Another more beautiful derivation (if only we could be sure it is right) is “that which is held up to the sunlight and in that proved, and approved.” But the meaning is probably “not so much the clear, the transparent, as the purged, the winnowed, the unmingled.” This grace will exclude all double-mindedness, the divided heart, the eye not single, all hypocrisies. (Trench: Synonyms).

If you can, read Mr. Bellett’s little book, “Woolen and Linen.” It is based on Lev. 19:19 and Deut. 22:11: “Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as woolen and linen together.” You will find it a word in season for today: searching and helpful. Later in this Epistle Paul could say, “One thing I do.” There was no mixture in his life or motives: neither should there be in ours. He who walks thus “will desire to hide nothing from the light that searches him. For his sun is his shield also” (Pridham).

But not only are we to be sincere, we are also to be “without offense.” The Greek word has the original meaning: “to strike against.” The thought is, that as we walk our foot might strike against a stone, or other obstacle, and we stumble. The exhortation here may mean either that we do not stumble ourselves, or that we do not cause others to stumble— I like to think it has both meanings: and if we walk without stumbling ourselves, then surely we will not cause others to stumble. The word is used also in two other places in the New Testament: Acts 24:16, translated a conscience “void of offense”: a conscience that looks back on the pathway and sees no stumbles that should be our object. It is also used in 1 Cor. 10:32: “Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.” Here we are to avoid putting a stumbling block in the way of any of these persons: and they comprise the whole world. In Jude 24, it is a different word; yet I think we may connect the meaning with this Scripture: “Unto Him that is able to keep you without stumbling....”

(New Translation). So we have no excuse for a stumble: if we will but let Him keep us.

Another has said of this passage (The Bible Treasury, Feb. 1st, 1865): “‘That ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.’ Wonderful thought! The Apostle actually prays for these believers as if he conceived it possible that, growing in love and intelligence, they might walk the path of faith till the day of Christ without a single false step: Paul’s marvel, perhaps, would have been that we should count it wonderful. Alas! we know we fail day by day because we are unspiritual. Why do we let out a vain word, or show a wrong feeling? Because we are not realizing the presence and the grace of God. No progress in the things of God will ever keep a person ... nothing but actual nearness to Him, and dependence on Him. What is a Christian, and what the condition and experience which Scripture recognizes for him here below? He is by grace brought, in virtue of Christ’s blood, into the presence of God; he has a power within him, the Holy Ghost, and power without him to lean upon, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and this uninterruptedly and always. Such is the theory: but what is the practice? As far as it is realized, the path is without a single stumble. And let us remember that such is the only sanctioned path for all saints. It belongs not of right to some advanced souls. It is what every Christian has to desire. We can therefore readily understand how some souls, hearing such thoughts as these, should embrace the idea of a state of perfection. But though the scheme is erroneous, and utterly short of our true standard in the Second Man, the last Adam, a Christian ought never to contentedly settle down in the thought that he must fail and sin day by day. What is this but calm acquiescence with dishonoring Christ? If we do fail, let us, at least, always say that it is our own fault, our own unwatchfulness, through not making use of the grace and strength we have in Christ. The treasure is there open for us, and we have only to draw upon it, and the effect is staid, calm, spiritual progress, the flesh judged, the heart overflowing with happiness in Christ ... the path without a single

stumble till the day of Christ."

"More than this, let it be remarked, he prays that they might be filled with the fruit of righteousness by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. There is no thought of, nor room for, imposing the law here, which is rather shut out from being the proper standard for the Christian. There is Another, who is both our new Object and our Rule, even Christ Himself, the image of God, the life and power of fruit-bearing for the believer. What a rule for our practical everyday walk!"

The last paragraph quoted introduces us to the fourth request in the Apostle's prayer. Actually it is very closely linked with the third request: "In order that ye may be sincere and without stumbling for Christ's day, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness by means of Jesus Christ, unto God's glory and praise." It is not "until Christ's day," but, "for Christ's day," (vs. 10) as in the New Translation, or, "unto," or, "against Christ's day." We find the expression "until Christ's day" in verse 6 of our chapter, and "for," or, "unto Christ's day" (vs. 6) again used in chapter 2:16. I think it looks forward to that day when Christ shall be supreme: all subject to His will: and when every man's work will be manifested. You will remember that the present time is called "man's day" (1 Cor. 4:3, Margin, & New Translation). What a contrast will "Christ's day" be!

"Being filled with the fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11) is literally, "having been filled" (2 Cor. 10:6) (the perfect participle), which seems to look forward to Christ's day, when the Apostle will rejoice to see these beloved saints like a tree having been well filled with fruit, and not an empty branch among them. And notice it is fruit: not, fruits. This fruit is like a bunch of grapes: "the results of grace are manifold, yet as to their material they are one, and each is necessary to the fullness of the rest." You will recall the Spirit speaks of "the fruit of the Spirit," (Eph. 5:9) in Gal. 5:22, and then enumerates nine different aspects of that fruit. In Eph. 5:9, we read of "the fruit of the light," (Eph. 5:9) (not of the Spirit). In James 3:18, we read again of "the fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11). In 2 Cor. 9:10, it is "products of your righteousness."

And what is "the fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11)? We must remember that a man is not only reckoned righteous by faith, as we get so clearly in Romans and Galatians, but also by works, as we get in James. Does not "the fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11) tell us of these "works," as intimated in the verse just quoted above "products of your righteousness"? Perhaps an illustration might help. In a certain Sunday School there was an exceedingly naughty boy named Leslie, about ten years of age. He could do more to upset the Sunday School than any child there, and he was a terror at home and at school. One day he was converted, and there was a great change. Some six or eight weeks later, after Sunday School had been dismissed and the children scattered, an older boy came to the teacher, and said: "My name is Tom. I live across the street from Leslie. A few weeks ago he said he'd become a Christian. I've been watching him since then; and if being a Christian has changed him to what he is now, I want to be a Christian too." This "change" was "the fruit of righteousness," (vs. 11) and also "the fruit of the righteous," (Eph. 5:9) as we get in Prov. 11:30: "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." To Tom it was indeed "a tree of life," for without speaking a word, Leslie had won a soul to the Lord. I think that is why the words, "He that winneth souls is wise," (Prov. 11:30) are included in that verse.

But let us never forget that "the fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11) is only by "means of Jesus Christ." He is the "Tree of Life," the "True Vine," and fruit is only borne on those branches that abide in Him (John 15). "And every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (verse 2). And so we find in Heb. 12:11, that chastening, though not joyous but grievous, yields "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby."

So, those who are justified by faith, who have Christ for their righteousness, when they walk in the light, keep the flesh judged, and are exercised unto godliness: such manifest in their walk "the fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11). And do not forget that there is not only to be "the fruit of righteousness," (vs. 11) but the tree is to be filled with the fruit of righteousness. It is as we find in John 15: "fruit," "more fruit," and "much fruit." And so the end and object of all, when "filled with the fruit of righteousness" (vs. 11) is to the glory of God. The true fruit of righteousness will not bring glory to us, but to God.

"Lord, answer this prayer of the Apostle in each one of us, for His Son's sake. Amen."

Lord, carry me up to Thy home in the glory, Where Thou hast purchased a mansion for me, Where, free from distractions and trials and sorrow, I'll rest in the joy of Thy presence with Thee.

Long has Thy Bride for Thy coming been waiting, To take her, as promised, to rest in Thy home; Come then, Lord Jesus, we long for Thy presence, Fully to know Thy deep love for thine own.

Here nations are striving, false teachers deceiving, Thy saints are divided and scattered from Thee. Come, gather us, Lord, to Thyself in the glory, And then come and reign o'er creation set free.

O Lord, we grow sleepy, and worldly, and lukewarm; Speak to our hearts of Thy coming again; Touch these cold hearts, with Thy love, as our Bridegroom, And hasten Thy coming to take us all home.

(J. B. Dunlop)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 9: In Your Heart

"Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."

"Just as it is right (or, just) for me to be thus minded (or, to think this) in behalf of you all, because you have me in your heart (or, because I have you in my heart), as all of you being, both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the glad tidings, my fellow-partners of this grace."

Philippians 1:7

In our last meditation we pondered Paul's persuasion that the One having begun a good work in the Philippian saints, would finish it up until Christ Jesus' day. Now we will see the reason for this persuasion, and that it was not alone that love hopeth all things: but it was the only right and just thing for Paul to think. The "me" is emphatic. Whatever it might be in the eyes of others, for Paul it was the only right thing. And may not this "right" thing apply to more than to the persuasion? Does it not include the Apostle's thankfulness in verse 3, and his joy in verse 4, at all his remembrance of them. It was right and just that he should be thankful; and right and just that he should rejoice.

And why was it right, or just? The answer may be equally rendered, "Because you have me in your heart," or, "Because I have you in my heart" (vs. 7). Which did the Spirit of God intend the Philippians to understand? We do not know: but perhaps, since both are true, and the words may mean both; the Spirit intended them to understand it in both ways. A dear little boy was sitting on his mother's knee, gazing into her eyes. The child said, "Mother, you must love me very much, because you carry round a little picture of me in your eyes: I can see it there." His mother replied, "And I can see a little picture of me in your eyes: how much you must love me!" It was mutual: and sure I am it was mutual with Paul and the Philippian saints. But let this remind us of Him Who has us in His heart.

We have noticed how often we find the little word "all," and here again Paul stresses the fact that they were all his fellow-partners. Sad to say they were not all of one mind about certain other matters: but when it came to Paul's bonds, and the gospel: they were all united: all of one mind. We have spoken of the seven times we find "fellowship" with regard to these saints, and this is one of them. Here it is fellowship with, or being fellow-partners of, Paul's bonds. We are apt to be ashamed of a friend in jail: but these dear saints were not ashamed, but gloried in being his fellow-partners. Is not this just what is meant in Hebrews, where we read, "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them" (Heb. 13:3). That is just what the Philippian saints did towards Paul.

But it was not only in his bonds they had fellowship: it was also in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. The defense is the negative, defensive side: the confirmation is the positive or aggressive side: and there are both sides to the gospel: not only its defense, but also the direct establishment and advancement of it. The Philippians were fellow-partners in both these. And they were "fellow-partners of this grace." Grace is favor: free, unmerited favor: and these dear saints were not only favored with having a part in the gospel: and what a favor that is!

but they were also favored with having part in Paul's bonds: and, as we saw, in the same chapter we read: "Unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (vs. 29). It is a wondrous privilege to preach Christ: but it is no less a privilege to suffer for His sake: you remember the apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. (Acts 5:41). But I fear many of us would prefer not to have this privilege. But the Lord can give, and does give, when the time comes, the grace to suffer for Him: and again let us remember that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. May the Lord help us each to be more like these dear Philippian saints!

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 8: Persuaded

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform (it) until the day of Jesus Christ".

"Having been persuaded of this very thing, that the (One) having begun (inaugurated) in you a good work, will finish it up until Christ Jesus' day."

Philippians 1:6

The word translated "persuaded" in the verse just quoted above, is often translated "believe." It is a persuasion that makes one believe; it made the Apostle quite sure of what he spoke. He had to say to the Galatians: "I stand in doubt of you," (Gal. 4:20) or, "I am perplexed about you." He had no doubt or perplexity as to the Philippian saints: and yet, though it was indeed by looking at the saints themselves he was so fully persuaded, as we shall see; yet his confidence was really in the Lord: he was persuaded that the One Who had begun the good work in them, would complete it: so his faith and confidence were in the Lord, rather than in the saints themselves. And it is well when our eyes are on the Lord, rather than on the saints only: though we may truly delight to see saints walking well. When the dear Apostle looked off to the Lord, he could add, even to the Galatians, "I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded" (Gal. 5:10). And to the Corinthians, whom he had to scold about so many things, he wrote, "having confidence in you all" (vs. 25) (2 Cor. 2:3). And at the very beginning of the first letter to them, before he mentions one word of blame, he writes, "…. our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall confirm you unto the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by Whom ye were called" (1 Cor. 1:8-10). The Apostle also writes to the Romans (15:14), to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 3:4), to Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5), and to Philemon (ver. 21), that he is persuaded of them. In every one of these cases (except 1 Cor. 1) it is the same word: being persuaded, being confident, or quite sure. And because of this confidence, he writes, "Therefore we are always of good cheer" (2 Cor. 5:6): "good cheer" is quite a different word. How often we find some who refuse to have confidence in those who have confessed the Lord's Name: and perhaps these very doubts raise doubts in the hearts of those who are truly the Lord's; and so stumble them. What good cheer to our own hearts should this confidence of the Apostle prove. Sometimes we see the saints we love going on so badly that we stand in doubt of them, we are perplexed as to them, are they truly saints or not? And yet we are persuaded that the Lord did begin a good work in them: and, coming nearer home, sometimes, perhaps, we are so disappointed in ourselves, that we wonder if it is possible that we ourselves are truly saints. How often does our heart condemn us! Let us remember, then, that God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. (1 John 3:20). Yes, at such times we need to look off unto Jesus, and we also may be persuaded that HE will finish up that work which HE began, unto, or, until, or, against, Christ Jesus' day. "Christian love is clear-sighted and full of trust with regard to its objects, because God Himself, and the energy of His grace, are in that love" (JND).

Knowing all the failures of the Corinthians, the Apostle falls back on the words: "God is faithful" (1 Cor. 10:13). What encouragement for us! We have no Apostles now: we have not even ordained "bishops and deacons" (vs. 1). But we have GOD: the same GOD as the Apostle; and God is faithful! As the Apostle parted from his beloved Ephesians, he said, "I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace" (Acts 20:32). And we still have the same resource: GOD, and the Word of HIS grace.

But if our confidence is at all in ourselves, then God allows us to see what a wretched foundation that is for confidence. It matters not how great the gift, nor how great the knowledge of the Word, our confidence must be in GOD Himself. And if our confidence is truly there, then,

like the Apostle, we may be “always of good cheer,” whether it be life or death: whether it be our daily walk or some special service our Master may give us: we may be truly confident, and so “always of good cheer.” We have seen that the Apostle’s confidence for the Corinthians was because God is faithful. For the Galatians, whose condition was even more serious, it was the Lord alone Who gave him hope. But here in Philippi it is different. Not only is his confidence in what GOD is, but also in what he saw of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, in these dear Philippian saints. He knew what they had been, and he knows what they are now. He saw such true enjoyment of Christ, such fellowship with His interests down here, that his confidence was not only in a general way he would meet them by and by with Christ, but he had complete confidence in the work of God in them all the way through.

In the sentence, “He Who has begun a good work in you,” the word “begun” has a solemn, ceremonial connection. “Inaugurated” might be a better word. It was no light matter to begin that work: let us ever remember it cost the life of the Son of God to begin it in any of us: and, if the work was real and true, it was no light matter with us either. But what comfort to look away from ourselves and our failures to Him Who began the work, and know we may count on HIM to finish it!

“The work which His goodness began, The arm of His strength will complete; His promise is Yea and Amen, And never was forfeited yet: Things future, nor things that are now, Nor all things below nor above, Can make Him His promise forego, Or sever our souls from His love.”

And let us remember that it is “God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (ch. 2:13). Both the willing and the working are from God: there is no room to boast. And if it is of GOD, it cannot fail, for, “HE FAILETH NOT.”

Notice the two “days” that are mentioned in these two verses, 5 & 6: “the first day,” and, “Christ Jesus’ day”: the beginning of the race and the ending. “The first day” was the day when they heard the gospel and believed it. When is “Christ Jesus’ day”?

The present time is called “man’s day” (1 Cor. 3:13, Margin). But “Christ Jesus’ day” is coming. Now, man is allowed to a large extent to have his own way. Then, Christ Jesus will have His own way. Then, all enemies will be put under His feet. Then, He will gather all His own unto Himself. Then, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. Then, even our bodies will be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Then, we shall be conformed unto the image of His Son. Then, He will finish up the good work which He began in us at the first day. (It is almost the same word as, “It is finished” at the Cross). Well may the Apostle cry: “I AM PERSUADED, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38-39). Lord, give us more of this “persuasion”!

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“Go into God’s great workshop and you will find nothing that bears the mark of haste, or mere impulse. What His grace begins, the arm of His strength will complete. It is not God’s way to do things by halves. God’s work is always thorough.”

(“Sidelights on the Epistle to the Philippians” by C. G. Baskerville)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 7: Thanksgiving and Prayer

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now”.

“I thank my God for all my remembrance of you, always in all supplication of mine making that supplication for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the interests of the gospel, from the first day until now.”

Philippians. 1:3-5

Notice how thanksgiving and prayer are linked together here: “I thank my God,” “always in all supplication” (Eph. 6:18). In the prison in Philippi in the early days, Paul and Silas had prayed and sung praises: and now in the prison at Rome, Paul is still doing the same thing. In chapter 4:6 of our Epistle he tells us the secret of that peace we saw in the previous verse: “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Thanksgiving sees the blessings already received, and prayer sees the needs still to be met. And Paul could never think of these dear saints in Philippi without giving thanks for them. The word is not, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (vs. 3). It is, rather, “for all my remembrance of you,” or, “my whole remembrance of you” (vs. 3). It was not only at isolated times he remembered and gave thanks for them, but the whole, complete memory of them, was one that filled him with thanksgiving. Notice how “all” is repeated in these verses: “all my remembrance” (1 Kings 17:18); “always”; “in all my supplication”; “for you all.”

There used to be a beggar in Shanghai who was so busy asking for gifts, that he never took time to thank those who gave to him. The result was that those who generally gave to the beggars, often passed him by. Might we not know more answers to our prayers if we spent more time in thanksgiving? In the days of old, there were those whose “office was to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even” (1 Chron. 23:28 & 30). Have we, who know God’s unspeakable gift, less cause for thanksgiving than they? From the very first Sabbath by the river side, when Lydia’s heart was opened, right up to that day, Paul gives thanks for them. How different to Galatia! Not a word of thanksgiving for them: the only church for whom the Apostle had nothing for which to give thanks!

But there was not only thanksgiving: there was supplication also: but that supplication was made with joy. Our dear brother Mr. Lavington, now with the Lord, wrote: “I call your attention to the large place in this Epistle, and in others, which the subject of prayer has with the Apostle, and I make bold to say that in practical Christian life and experience, this is the breath of the Christian. The Apostle was one who, in writing his letters, never wrote (as one has said) with a dry eye: such is his heart for the saints of God. Continually we find also the references to the way his heart is occupied with the Lord, as being poured out to his God and Father, or to the Head of the Church, in prayer, in order that His saints may be maintained, and that those in whom God has begun a good work, may continue in the faith grounded and settled. (Eph. 1:16-23; Eph. 3:14-19; Col. 2:1-3).”

But we must not pass by those two little words: “my God”: “I thank my God for all my remembrance of you.” The Apostle had just said he was the slave of Christ Jesus, which means he belonged to Christ Jesus. Now he speaks of “my God.” When speaking to the heathen on the ship on the way to Rome, he said, “Whose I am, and Whom I serve” (Acts 27:23). But now, writing to the saints, he says: “my God.” Not only are these words intensely individual, but they also tell of love and nearness. The Apostle loved to use those words: we find them again in chapter 4:19, “My God shall supply all your need.” He thanks “my God” for the Romans, and for Philemon. (Rom. 1:8; Philem. 1:4). To the Corinthians he wrote, “I fear.... lest my God will humble me among you.” In Philippians 3:8 he speaks of “Christ Jesus my Lord” (ch. 3:8). It is a grand thing to be able to know God as “our own God” (Psa. 67:6). The voluntary slave in Ex. 21 could say, “I love my Master” (Ex. 21:5). Thomas said, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). How good when we can say, “I am His, and He is mine, forever, and forever!”

We must link verse 5 with verse 3; “I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you.... for your fellowship in the interests of the gospel, from the first day until now.” We have already spoken of the seven times we find fellowship linked with the Philippian saints: but what is fellowship, as used in the New Testament? The Greek word for it comes from the word used for “partners” in Luke 5:10. James and John were partners with Simon in the fishing business. I believe in the New Testament, fellowship always means a relation between persons, based on Christian unity: perhaps “joint participation” is one of the best definitions of the meaning. When Lydia received Paul and his company into her house, she was having joint participation in the gospel: when Paul was preaching in Thessalonica, and the Philippian saints sent him gifts, (Phil. 4:16) they were having joint participation in the gospel, or, “fellowship in the gospel” (vs. 5).

Now the Apostle gives thanks for this fellowship in the gospel from the first day until “the now,” the present moment. Sometimes the saints grow weary of sharing in the gospel; adversity comes; evil reports are spread; there are heavy demands at home; and the fellowship in the gospel grows cold. It is generally the poor, like the Philippians, who have that unceasing fellowship in the gospel, that never grows weary. Indeed, Paul could not accept this fellowship in the gospel from the rich saints in Corinth, who were going on badly. See 2 Cor. 11:7-12. But what is so precious is that unwearying fellowship, that never loses heart; through evil report and good report; through dark days and bright; through poverty and prosperity: that is the fellowship in the gospel that the Philippian saints had.

You remember David made it a rule that those who went down to the battle, and those who tarried by the stuff, should share alike: they were having joint participation in the war. But gifts are not the only way of showing fellowship in the gospel: there are countless other ways. Epaphras labored fervently in prayer: and so may we. What a cheer an encouraging letter is! Some hold the hats of those preaching in the open air; some help with the singing; some bring friends to the meetings. Love of the gospel, and love of the One who is the theme of the gospel, will devise means to have a share in the interests of the gospel. And, “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward His Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Heb. 6:10).

But, sad to say, not all in Paul’s day had fellowship in the gospel. There were those who preached Christ even of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to the Apostle. They probably were real Christians, and they preached Christ: but they had not fellowship in the gospel. There have always been such, and there always will be. Let us take heed when we find even true Christians seeking to add affliction to those who preach the gospel, rather than having fellowship in the gospel. It is so easy to find fault, and those who do so, often know little of the true circumstances. I need hardly add that we cannot have fellowship with what is contrary to the Word. But let us beware lest our criticisms are merely an excuse for our lack of fellowship “in the interests of the gospel.” Let us each one, Beloved, seek more and more to imitate these dear Philippian saints in their fellowship in the interests of the gospel!

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“A worker who is ‘winsome’ will surely win some!”

(Charles G. Baskerville)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 6: Grace Be Unto You and Peace

“Grace (be) unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and (from) the Lord Jesus Christ”.

“Grace to-you, and peace from God our Father and (the) Lord Jesus Christ”.

Philippians. 1:2

“Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and (from the) Lord Jesus Christ.” We must not think of these words as being merely a formal greeting, as we so often begin a letter: “Dear Sir”: or “Dear Mrs....” when the person to whom we are writing is not dear to us at all. No, this greeting really means what it says: and though written by Paul so long ago to the saints in Philippi, we may take it for ourselves from the Holy Spirit: and we may enjoy all the sunshine of those two little words, GRACE and PEACE. It is true that most of the epistles use these same words, though Timothy, Titus, and 2 John (all letters to individuals) have “mercy” added.

Our Epistle begins with, “Grace to you,” and ends with, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (be) with your spirit” (Gal. 6:18). And in verse 7, chapter 1, Paul writes that they were all his “joint-partners” in this grace. In this grace we all have a share. Well may every one of us sing:

GRACE IS THE SWEETEST SOUNDThat ever reached our earsWhen conscience charged, and justice frowned,‘Twas grace removed our fears.

As we grow older, and learn to know ourselves more and more, perhaps we learn to value more highly that grace that picked us up, gave us the privilege of hearing the gospel, and believing it; and, perhaps most wonderful of all, to know the grace that has borne with us all along the way, through all these years, and has never cast us off, or given us up, but will perform that work, that “good work,” begun in us; right on to the day of Jesus Christ. (Verse 6). It has all been grace; All must be grace; right from start to finish.

Raise glad the song! for who can tell How sovereign grace dissolved the spell That kept us bound in chains; And from that dear and happy day, How oft constrained by grace to say, That grace triumphant reigns!

Grace means “free, undeserved favor.” And, thanks be to God, that is just what God has shown us; and this is the message with which this lovely Epistle begins. But let us remember it is grace, not from pity, but from love. I write in Hong Kong, surrounded by tens of thousands of refugees in the most desperate poverty, misery, and squalor: daily I see the children in their rags and wretchedness, and my heart is moved with pity, and I seek to do what little I can to remove their misery. In a measure I show them grace, for they do nothing to deserve help. But it is grace moved by pity. But there are a few whom I dearly love, what a difference that makes! A few days ago a dear child we have known and loved for several years, showed me the soles of her shoes, without saying a word: both had great holes right through to her bare feet. I got her new shoes, and at the same time a pretty new dress, for I think she had only the shabby one she had on: I paid about ninety cents for it. When I gave them to her, she climbed on my knee, buried her head on my shoulder, her heart too full for words: and then at last she looked up with wonder, saying: “Mr. Lee, you must have paid a great deal for it!” It was grace, but grace moved by love, and who can say whose pleasure was greater, the child’s, or mine? Let us ponder the love behind the words: “Grace to you,” and let us remember always the unfathomable cost. May our hearts respond, not with any formal thanks, but like the child, may our hearts burst forth: “THANKS BE UNTO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT!!!” (2 Cor. 9:15).

But that is not all. In chapter 1:29, we read that God has not only “graced” us, or, favored us, with believing on Christ, (for the word is almost the same), but also with suffering for His sake. How very, very glad we are that God has graced us with believing on Christ! As we see those who have never heard the story, and those who have refused to believe it: well may we thank God that He has graced us with both hearing and believing: for it is grace alone that has done it all. But perhaps we do not realize that it is the very same grace that favors us “to suffer for His sake” (vs. 29). We rejoice in hope of the glory: we rejoice in “the many mansions”: all the fruit of grace: but the suffering ... ah, somehow, that is different! Yet both the believing and the suffering are given to us, “on the behalf of Christ.” And the same grace that gave us to believe can give us the courage, if need be, to suffer: we can do neither the one nor the other of ourselves: both are entirely His grace.

But not only does the Apostle wish grace to the saints, but also peace. Perhaps first we should notice the difference between “peace with God” and “the peace of God” (ch. 4:7). The saints at Philippi already had “peace with God.” “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). Lydia found peace with God, that Sabbath Day by the riverside. The jailor found peace with God, the night of the earthquake. Have you, reader, found “peace with God”? You may, just by taking God at His word.

But the peace in our salutation is different. This peace is “the peace of God” (ch. 4:7) that keeps, or guards, our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:7). Today men passionately long for peace, but how few enjoy it! In many parts of the East, you may hear the greeting: “Salaam.” It is the same word as “Salem” in the Bible, and that means “peace” (Heb. 7:2). But those very lands that so often say, “Salaam,” know less, perhaps, of true peace, peace in their hearts, than almost any other part. This is the peace that God offers His children today. His grace and His peace are as full and as free as they were in Paul’s day: and both are for you, my reader, and for me. They are offered us from “God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 2). None else can give these gifts, and like all heavenly gifts, they are without money and without price.

But could Paul honestly wish peace to these saints in Philippi, when they were suffering for their Master’s sake? Can peace and persecution go together? Yes, strange as it may seem, they can, and often do, go together. In 1 Tim. 2:2, we are told to pray for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life (New Translation); and the Word goes on to say that such a life is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. Sad to say, our brethren in some lands are not leading such a life. Perhaps this is because so often we forget this prayer. These words in 1 Tim. 2:2 imply on the one hand, tranquility without, and on the other, tranquility within. But can we have tranquility within when there is no tranquility without? Yes, we can! That is part of what we learn in Philippians. It is still true: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee” (Isa. 26:3). How? Why? “Because he trusteth in Thee,” (Isa. 26:3) and “In the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages” (Isa. 26:3-4: Margin).

But notice the closing words of our verse: the grace and peace are “from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 2). Notice how God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, are intimately linked together, as Joint Givers of these good gifts. It would be blasphemy to link the name of men or angels with “God our Father” in this way. In chapter 2 we will read plainly that Christ Jesus is equal with God: but this verse tells us the same wondrous truth. May God help us ever to cling to this foundation of the faith: and to enjoy the grace and peace offered to us!

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“Riches of His grace” (Eph. 2:7). Eph. 1:7

“Riches of His glory” (Eph. 3:16). Eph. 3:16

Called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9)

Fellow-citizens (Eph. 2:19)

Fellow-heirs (Eph. 3:6)

Fellow-soldiers (Phil. 2:25)

Fellow-workers the (Col. 4:11)

Fellow-laborers same (Phil. 4:3)

Fellow-helpers (3 John 8)

Fellow slaves (Col. 1:7;4:7; Rev. 6:11)

Fellow-imitators (Phil. 3:17)

Yoke fellow (Phil. 4:3)

Heirs together of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7)

Joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17)

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“The fellowship of His sufferings” (ch. 3:10)

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 5: Bishops and Deacons

“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons”.

“Paul and Timotheus, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, to the (ones) being in Philippi, with overseers and deacons.”

Philippians. 1:1

We have already seen that every true believer in our Lord Jesus Christ is a “saint,” but we find in this greeting in our first verse, two other classes. Paul writes not only to “all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi,” (vs. 1) but he adds, “with (the) bishops and deacons,” (vs. 1) or, as the New Translation puts it: “with (the) overseers and ministers” (vs. 1). This does not mean that the bishops and deacons were not saints: surely they were: but they had also this special position in the assembly. Notice that the little word (the) in this quotation is in brackets, to show that it is not in the Greek Testament, as though the Spirit of God is not pointing out any very special people. Dr. Vaughan translates it: “with any bishops and deacons.” The word “bishop,” or “overseer,” (the same word in Greek), does not have at all the same sense in the New Testament, that it has come to have among men today. And the word “minister” used in the New Translation does not in the least mean the position occupied by the “minister” of a church today. It merely means one who ministers, or serves. Compare Matt. 20:28; Mark 1:31; Mark 9:35, etc.

The word bishop, or overseer, (same word), was also used interchangeably with the word “elders.” In Acts 20:17, the Scripture speaks of “elders,” while in verse 28, speaking to the same persons, we read: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God” (Acts 20:28). The word is exactly the same as is translated “bishops” in Philippians 1:1. Compare also Titus 1:5 & 7: “I left thee in Crete, that thou mightest.... establish elders in each city, as I had ordered thee.... the overseer must be free from all charge, etc” (New Translation).

There were evidently a number of overseers, or bishops, in the assembly at Philippi. The position which bishops hold today in the various denominations, is totally unknown and unheard of in the New Testament; and did not come into use until after the days of the apostles. God’s way is to have a number of bishops, or overseers, in one assembly, as here in Philippi, or in Ephesus (Acts 20:28). Man’s way is to have one bishop over a number of “churches.”

How were the overseers, or bishops, appointed in the days of the apostles? In every case they were chosen and appointed either by the apostles themselves, or by some person, as Timothy or Titus, authorized by the apostles to select, or “establish” them. See the verse quoted above from Titus 1:5. See also, for example, Acts 14:23: “And having chosen them elders in every assembly, having prayed with fastings, they committed them to the Lord” (New Translation).

There is not a single instance in the New Testament where an assembly chose, or was instructed to choose elders or deacons for themselves. They were only chosen by an apostle, or by one whom an apostle ordered to do so. (Titus 1:5. New Translation). I know that it is the custom with many today for an assembly to choose its own elders, or overseers, or bishops, and deacons. But this custom is unknown in the New Testament. No church in the New Testament ever pretended to do such a thing. Let us at least be willing to acknowledge our real lack in this respect; it is our duty to God, because it is the truth; and the owning it keeps one from much presumption. For in general Christendom is doing, without apostles, what is only Scriptural to be done by or with them. The appointment of elders and deacons goes upon the notion that there is an adequate power still resident in men or the Church. But the only Scriptural ordaining power is an apostle acting directly, or indirectly. Titus or Timothy did not go and ordain elders, except as authorized by the Apostles.

But there are the clearest, and most minute directions given us in the Scriptures, by which we may know and recognize those who are qualified in the sight of God to act in this capacity. See 1 Tim. 3, and Titus 1:5-9. Ponder these qualifications: (Alternative readings are from the “New Translation”).

“If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, (sober) sober, (discreet) of good behavior, (decorous) given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, (not greedy of filthy lucre;) but patient, (mild; moderate) not a brawler, (not addicted to contention) not covetous; (not fond of money) one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” 1 Tim. 3

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed (or, ordered) thee: if any be blameless, the husband of one wife have faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, (or, head-strong) not soon angry, (or passionate) not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, (discreet) just, holy, temperate; holding fast (or clinging to) the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.” Titus 1:5-9

As we ponder these minute instructions: so clear that every saint may recognize who is qualified as an elder, or overseer, or bishop: and as we remember that, according to the Word of God, no assembly has authority to appoint elders ... and certainly no individual has such authority ... are we wrong in believing that now the individual saints in every assembly are responsible to recognize those so qualified, and submit themselves to such: as the saints in Philippi would submit themselves to the bishops established by the Apostle? Human appointment is man’s way: but God’s way is: “Know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 Thess. 5:12). The true way to glorify God is not to assume an apostolic authority that we do not

possess, but to act confiding in the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, Who does remain. It is the Lord Himself, acting by the Holy Ghost, who has put each saint in his own particular place in the body, as He sees fit: and it is our responsibility to recognize those whom the Lord has qualified to do the work of bishops or deacons.

There is no thought or suggestion in Scripture of a number of assemblies, or one assembly, being in subjection to one man: though even in the days of the apostles, as in our own days, there was a Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence (3 John 9): but the Scripture only mentions him to condemn him.

In the days of the apostles, a bishop was simply an “overseer,” and a deacon was simply one who serves. The office of overseer seems to have dealt more with the internal, the spiritual, side of the affairs of the assembly; though he is to be given to hospitality, which includes the temporal side. As we search the Scriptures we may find a good deal of light on what the office of a bishop entailed. In 1 Peter 5:1, 2, we see that an “elder” was to “feed the flock of God” (1 Peter 5:2). The word translated “feed” is really much wider than simply to feed. It means “to act as a shepherd.” It carries with it all the loving, faithful care that a good shepherd gives to his flock. This one word alone will, perhaps, include all those which follow.

In Hebews 13:7 (margin) we read of “the guides.” The word literally means, “the ones leading”: like the shepherd leads and guides the flock. “He goeth before them,” (John 10:4), the Good Shepherd could say. That was one of the duties of the overseer. In Heb. 13:17, we read of the same ones ... the guides ... and here it tells us they “watch for your souls” (Heb. 13:17). The word “watch” means, “to be sleepless,” and so, “to be vigilant” … just as a good shepherd kept watch over his flock by day and by night, like the shepherds of Bethlehem (Luke 2:8), or Jacob, who could say: “In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes” (Gen. 31:40). So should the true overseer watch, by day and by night, over the flock of God.

In 1 Thess. 5:12, we read: “We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you.” In this verse we find three more duties of the overseer. First, he labored. The word originally meant to grow weary. It tells of the toil that wearies one.

How well Paul understood this. Such is the toil and labor of the true overseer. “Are over you,” is literally, “set over,” so means to preside, or rule, or govern: but it has also the meaning: “to be a protector, or guardian, to give aid, to care for.” How well that describes the work of a good shepherd. To “admonish” is to “put in mind,” and so, to “exhort.”

We have already seen that the overseer is to be as “the steward of God” (Titus 1:7). This is a most solemn and responsible position: and, “It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2). Oh, that every assembly of the saints had a few such overseers.

The Greek word used for “elder,” sometimes has only the meaning of an “old man,” as 1 Tim. 5:1, where it is in contrast to “younger men.” It would seem that all who held the official position of an “elder,” were old men: but not all “old men” held that official position. We are specially warned that an elder (or, overseer) must not be a “novice.” The same word is used of “elders” of the Jews, and we often meet the word in Revelation.

The word “deacon” means simply “one who ministers,” or, “serves”: for “minister” is really only another name for “servant.” In the New Testament it has not the least meaning that it has come to have today, a man in charge of a “church.” It refers to the lowly service of love, which has been associated with those who were younger in the Truth, and not, perhaps, gifted in a particular way. They yet have the service of the saints at heart, and are concerned with the little things in the practical life of the assembly: “serving tables,” for instance: as we find in Acts 6:1-6. When I was a boy my father and I used to go early to the meeting room to get it ready. Part of my work was to dust the seats. One day my father remarked to me that this was the work of a deacon, and that “they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:13).

We should today look earnestly to our Lord Jesus Christ as Head, that He would raise up those who would be able to serve and minister to the saints, in this lowly way, loving them with the heart of Christ. The qualifications for the deacon are set forth with equal clearness to those of the bishop: “grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Stephen and Philip should encourage the “deacons.” We may see in chapter 2 that Epaphroditus did the work of a deacon for the assembly in Philippi.

As we read these qualifications, I fear they make most of us hang our heads in shame, so few seem able to meet the requirements for bishop or deacon. Let us remember the only One Who has perfectly fulfilled them is He Who is called “The Bishop of your souls,” (1 Peter 2:25), and Who said of Himself, “I am among you as he that serveth” (Luke 22:27): literally, “as the One being deacon” (Luke 22:27).

If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God 1 Tim. 3:5

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 4: To All the Saints

“Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi”.

“Paul and Timotheus, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, to the (ones) being in Philippi.”

Philippians. 1:1

“To all the saints.” The Spirit of God seems to delight to use this little word “all.” We find it again and again in this Epistle. I think the Greek word “all” occurs some 34 times. We can think of Lydia and her household; of the jailor and his household. Two sisters who had a quarrel are also included: and many others, whose names are in the Book of Life. And may we not include ourselves also? If we cannot come in with Lydia

or the jailor, perhaps we can with Euodias and Syntache. I doubt not the Spirit of God has given us this little book for the express purpose of putting our names, also, into that little word “all.” May the sweet and solemn sentences that flow from it, sink down deep into each of our hearts!

But I think there is another lesson for us in these words. How often we forget “all the saints.” How often our thoughts and prayers include only the saints in one little group, that is of special interest to us. Let us remember that God’s heart, God’s thought, goes out to “all the saints.” When I was a child, every night and morning my father would pray for “the whole Church of God.” This is as it should be: and if we are walking down here as Christ would have us walk, we will not be content that our hearts should take in any smaller circle than “all the saints.”

We may not be able to walk with them all, in the paths they have chosen, but we may love them, and pray for them, all. Before the assembly at Ephesus had left their first love (Rev. 2:4), Paul could write of their “love unto all the saints” (Eph. 1:15).

And there is another thing that little word “all” makes us think of. Suppose the Postmaster got a letter to deliver, addressed: “To: All the saints in Christ Jesus which are in Toronto, or London, or New York, or Hong Kong.”

How puzzled he would be to know what to do with it! And yet that is the way this letter was addressed: and that is the way the Lord would still have His people: “That they all may be one” (John 17:21).

These humble people, the woman who sold purple, and the man who guarded a prison cell, were saints. What is a saint? We hear people speak of Saint Peter, and Saint Paul; but we never hear the Bible speak in this way. And yet both Peter and Paul were saints. It has been said, “Paul was a saint, but Saint Paul is a devil.” What is meant by this? Today men and women worship “saints”; and anyone who accepts worship, except God Himself, is in reality the devil. You remember the devil showed our Lord “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:8-10). The moment the devil asked the Lord to worship him, he manifested clearly who he was. True, the Lord knew from the beginning the tempter was the devil: but He did not call him by his name, Satan, until he asked for worship. And so we read in 1 Cor. 10:19, 20, that those who sacrifice to idols, sacrifice to devils, and not to God. We may know immediately that anything, or anyone, who seeks worship, or who accepts worship or sacrifice, except God only, is a devil. Sad to say this is true, even though the people may call themselves Christians, and though they worship honored servants of God, such as Peter and Paul. See also Acts 14:14-15. Do not let us be deceived, whether men worship idols, or the highest of the apostles, or even angels, (Rev. 22:8-9; Col. 2:18); they are, in reality, worshipping devils. We in China always need to bear these things in mind. And those at home, as well as we in the dark lands, do well to remember the words of the Apostle John: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

But who is a saint? Lydia was a saint: the jailor was a saint: Euodias was a saint, and also Syntache. A saint means a holy person, a person separated to God. A person who is a saint should live “as becometh saints” (Eph. 5:3). A saint should live a holy life, and walk in a way that pleases God. Yet that is not what makes a person a saint in God’s eyes, for we find the Spirit of God calls the Corinthians saints, “saints by calling,” (1 Cor. 1:2), and they were behaving very badly indeed, so the Spirit of God spends most of two long Epistles finding fault with them: but He begins by calling them “saints.” What, then, is a saint? Every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a saint. Every person bought with His precious blood is a saint: these are all separated from the world, because they are bought with that blood. In Eph. 2:19 the Spirit writes to men and women who once were without God, separated from God, (that is the meaning), but now they are separated to God; they are “saints.” He calls them “fellow-citizens with the saints” (Eph. 2:19); citizens of Heaven: holy men: saints. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ: if you are washed in His precious blood: if you are born again, and have eternal life: then you are a saint: just as truly a saint as the saints in Philippi, or just as truly as the Apostles Peter or Paul themselves. But the word saint should make us think especially of God’s people, separated, or, consecrated, to God: set apart for Him.

Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age. Gal. 1:4

Meditations on Philippians: Sacrifices of Joy, Chapter 3: The Signature

“Paul and Timotheus, slaves of CHRIST JESUS.”

Philippians 1:1

The “signatures” (if we may call them this) in the salutations of the Epistles come at the beginning of the letters, instead of at the end, as with us. They are full of the deepest interest and instruction. Perhaps none more so than in the little Epistle before us. Let us review them: (quotations are from the New Translation by J.N. Darby).

Romans: “Paul bondman of Jesus Christ, (a) called apostle” (Rom. 1:1).

1 Corinthians: “Paul, (a) called apostle of Jesus Christ, by God’s will, and Sosthenes the brother.”

2 Corinthians: “Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by God’s will, and the brother Timotheus” (2 Cor. 1:1).

Galatians: “Paul, apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God (the) Father who raised Him from among the dead, and all the brethren with me.”

Ephesians: “Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by God’s will” (Eph. 1:1).

Philippians: “Paul and Timotheus, bondmen of Jesus Christ” (vs. 1).

Colossians: “Paul apostle of Christ Jesus, by God’s will, and Timotheus the brother” (Col. 1:1).

1 & 2 Thessalonians: “Paul and Silvanus and Timotheus” (1 Thess. 1:1).

1 Timothy: “Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the commandment of God our Savior, and of Christ Jesus our hope.”

2 Timothy: “Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, according to promise of life, the (life) which is in Christ Jesus.”

Titus: “Paul, bondman of God, and apostle of Jesus Christ according to (the) faith of God’s elect, and knowledge of (the) truth which (is) according to piety” (Titus 1:1).

Philemon: “Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timotheus the brother.”

Hebrews: None.

James: “James, bondman of God and of (the) Lord Jesus Christ” (James 1:1).

1 Peter: “Peter, apostle of Jesus Christ.”

2 Peter: “Simon Peter, bondman and apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1).

1 John: None.

2 & 3 John: “The elder.”

Jude: “Jude, bondman of Jesus Christ, and brother of James” (Jude 1).

It will be noticed that 1 & 2 Thessalonians contain no title, but the names only of Paul and his two companions. In Philemon Paul takes the title of “prisoner” only, and links Timothy with himself. In every other of his epistles, except Philippians, Paul uses the title of “apostle.”

This title included in it the authority that the Lord had given him (see 2 Cor. 10:8), and in most of these epistles he is exercising this authority. In Corinth and Galatia the churches had challenged his authority.

In Philemon Paul says, “I might be much bold to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love’s sake I rather beseech thee, being such an one as Paul the aged.” That tells us plainly why he does not wish to exercise his authority here; so we would not expect to find the title “apostle.” We do not know the human author of Hebrews, and it is best for us not to guess at what the Lord has seen best to hide: but we can well understand the reason that we find no title, or “signature,” of author here, for in Hebrews Christ Himself is the Apostle, the High Priest, the Author and Finisher of faith (3:1 & 12:2). How unseemly would it have been for any man to have assumed a place or title in the face of such an array of titles of our Lord Himself!1

And I think this is the key to the salutation in Philippians, where Paul omits “apostle” entirely and links himself with Timothy as “slaves,” or bondmen, of Jesus Christ. In this little book the Lord presents Himself to us as the One Who “took upon Himself the form of a slave” (2:7). How could Paul take any title higher than his Master, Who had gone to the very lowest depths for his sake? And so we gaze with wonder and delight at this mark of perfection in the opening words. In Hebrews the writer cannot use the title “Apostle” for his Lord has taken that title Himself. In Philippians the writer cannot use the title “apostle” for his Lord has taken the form of a “slave”!

Our thoughts go back to Ex. 21, where we see the Hebrew servant, who, of his own free will, became “a slave forever,” because of love: love to his master, his wife, and his children: and so he would not go out free: he would rather suffer, he would have his ear pierced through with an awl, as proof that now he is a “slave forever.” And so, Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, took upon Himself the form of a slave: hands and feet and side pierced, as proof that He is the Slave forever. (The words for “form” are the same). And we see this beautiful picture drawn for us long ago in the Old Testament.

There are three special marks that should characterize “a slave of Jesus Christ” —redemption, ownership, and devotedness. We were slaves of sin and Satan, but our Lord Jesus Christ redeemed us. Perhaps you recall the story of the man who bought a slave at a very high cost: and when he had paid the price, and the slave was his own, he took the chains from his hands and feet, threw them away, and said, “I bought you to set you free. You are a free man!” He was redeemed. The freed slave fell at the feet of him who bought him, crying: “I am your slave forever!” It was love, the bonds of love, which are stronger than the bonds of steel, that made that free man once again a slave, “a slave forever.” Only one other of Paul’s friends2 bears this honorable title of “slave”: and that is Epaphras, in Col. 4:12, who is called “slave of Christ Jesus” (Greek). In passing we might note the peculiar beauty of the salutation of James, and also of Jude, if they are the brothers of our Lord; and we may see that each salutation is a proof of His deity, by those who had probably been “brought up” with Him.

And so we read, “Paul and Timotheus, slaves of Christ Jesus.” Slaves, because they were bought with a price: (1 Cor. 6:20 & 7:23): but slaves also because they were bound to their Master, Christ Jesus, with the strongest of all bonds, the bonds of love. Can I, can you, truthfully be called “slaves of Christ Jesus”? That men may be His slaves, we can in measure understand: but when we come to Chapter 2 and find that Christ Jesus has taken upon Himself the form of a slave: when we find that He is “a Slave forever”, that is beyond us: and we joyfully fall at His feet, and cry, “Whose I am, and Whom I serve” (Acts 27:23). Well may we sing:

(Mechthild of Hellfde)

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