Philippians - Commentaries by Algernon James Pollock

Comforted of God, Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness, The

Article from https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb

"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." (Phil. 4:6-7).

The peace of God instead of earthly care! What a blessed substitute! How infinite God's peace! How innumerable our cares! And yet the heart and mind that is burdened by care may find perfect relief in the enjoyment of the peace of God.

Now, what is the secret? How can this relief—and far more than relief—be found? To inure oneself to pain, as the Stoics of old, is far short of the peace of God. Anyone can understand the effort of the philosopher, who sets his teeth and bravely determines to master the ills of life; but to become possessed, to be kept, or guarded, or garrisoned as a fortress held by power unconquerable, of the peace of God amid sorrows and tears and difficulties, is altogether beyond comprehension. It is none the less true.

Let us examine our passage: " Be careful for nothing!"

The word "nothing" covers the whole range of wilderness anxieties without omitting one. It does not include sin, far from it, for the simple reason that sin is in no wise contemplated in this epistle. It is not proper to the experience of the Christian, though, alas! every true believer realizes its presence, and needs to be on constant guard against its subtle workings. Sin is abnormal to Christian experience—not impossible, but not normal. It is confessed and judged just on that very account.

The child of God should be most careful about sin, but apart from that he should be careful about nothing—no thing!

"But in everything," here is the blessed remedy: " by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

This is exercise, deep, earnest and precious. It is not carelessness nor indifference. There is prayer; there is supplication; there is making requests known to God; and there is the blending of thanksgiving with every prayer. This signifies close personal dealing with God.

" In everything," no matter how small, nor how great or complex, let each request of the burdened heart be laid before Him.

The Bible teems with instances of prayerful men, who spread all kinds of requests before God, from kings on their thrones to prisoners in chains, and never was a deaf ear turned to the lowly and believing suppliant.

Supplication is prayer intensified; it is importunity; its root idea is the sense of want; it is illustrated in the Prodigal Son. The word is oft-times used by the Apostle Paul; but it must carry no legal, or cringing, or selfish element; it must be sustained by thanksgiving; for remember that the Christian has received infinitely more than he can ever request. His blessings far exceed his greatest wants. God loves a thankful suppliant, and in this happy spirit the requests are made known to One who assuredly knows all about them, but who waits for the cries of the wearied child. so that He may pour in the flood of His own incomprehensible peace. As God's peace enters care departs; the soul is tranquilized. No direct answer may have been gathered—the thorn may remain in the flesh—but the heart and mind are garrisoned by the deep, eternal calm that marks the throne on high. See the reflection of that calm as it shone in the face of Stephen; see it in the words of Paul: "I am ready to be offered"; recall it in the bold language of the three men who had to face the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar, when they said: " We are not careful to answer thee in this matter... We will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." And witness the Son of God as their companion in that fiery ordeal.

Ay, and thousands of others of lesser fame rise to bear brilliant testimony in lives of labor for Christ or on beds of pain; in scenes of tumult or amid the bitter worries of daily desert life to the reality of that wonderful peace of God, which, weak and failing as they have been, has garrisoned heart and mind for days and months and years of varied pilgrim experiences.

This is perhaps one of the very finest and most exquisite visible proofs of the genuineness of the faith of Christ. May reader and writer know the depths of God's peace better, and may that wonderful peace, as the result of prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, bring conscious relief to the heart, and brightness to the spirit, so that our step may be quickened and our very face made to reflect a little more of the glory of that place where alone the peace of God can be found.

An Examination of Dr. E.W. Bullinger's Bible Teaching, Paul's Desire in Philippians 1:23

We come now to the fourth of the five passages which, Dr. Bullinger says, are generally relied on and referred to by Traditionists. We read, "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1:23).

Commenting on this he writes: "We have... shown that the desire of the Apostle was not 'to depart' himself, by dying; but his desire was for the return of Christ; the verb rendered 'depart' being used elsewhere in the New Testament only in Luke 12:36, where it is rendered return; 'when he shall RETURN from the wedding.' May we not fairly ask, Why are we not to translate it the same way in Phil. 1:23?" (pp. 30, 31).

One cannot but feel a measure of indignation at a writer juggling with words, which looks like endeavoring to evade the obvious meaning of the passage. Dr. Bullinger says the Apostle Paul was waiting for the return of Christ. But the passage does not say so. But even if we allow him to alter the word from "depart" to "return" he is no better off. If we alter the verse to suit him, it would read, "Having a desire to return, and to be with Christ." It would be the desire of the Apostle for his own return, and not the return of Christ. To alter the words as Dr. Bullinger suggests would be to make no sense. What a good thing it is, that he did not produce the Revised Version by his own unaided efforts. What an unutterably unreliable translation he would have produced!

Further, we spoke of juggling with words. Why did Dr. Bullinger print the word, "RETURN" in capital letters, and not give us the whole expression, "RETURN FROM"? To "RETURN FROM" clearly means to "Depart." If I return from New York to Boston, it means I came from Boston to New York, and am now departing from New York, and going to Boston, which clearly means, I "DEPART" from New York. Dr. Bullinger is only throwing dust in the eyes of his readers. The passage most plainly means that the Apostle had a desire to die, and to be with Christ, which latter is far better.

In a footnote to page 20 Dr. Bullinger says, "True in Phil. 1:21 some think Paul spoke of death as 'gain,' but we may ask, Whose gain? The answer is clear, for the whole context from verses 12-24 shows that Christ and His cause are the subjects to which he is referring; not himself. Paul's imprisonment had turned out to be for 'the furtherance of the gospel' (ver. 12). His death might further it still more, and thus prove a 'gain' for it."

How Dr. Bullinger, who was quite able to read English, can say that Paul did not refer TO HIMSELF in Phil. 1:21 is staggering. Let us quote the text for the benefit of the readers of this pamphlet: "For TO ME to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). "TO ME," clearly governs both statements, so that it could read, "To ME to live is Christ, and to ME to die is gain."

Dr. Bullinger also suggests that the gain of dying to Paul would be because he was in prison, and death "would have been a happy issue out of his then afflictions." We remember that the Apostle wrote to the Philippian saints from prison, and instead of only wishing to die, he was in a strait betwixt two, that is, to abide in the flesh was more needful for the saints, yet to depart and to be with Christ was "FAR BETTER."

Dr. Bullinger evidently felt himself in a difficulty, when he wrote: "We have four passages which seem to be opposed to those we have quoted from the Old Testament. Both cannot be true. We must either explain away the Old Testament passages, or we must see whether these four passages admit of other renderings, which remove their apparent oppositions" (p. 33).

These four passages, which we have just been examining, viz., Matt. 22:32; Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23, and the Old Testament passages quoted by Dr. Bullinger, including his great foundation (?) text of Eccl. 9:5 are ALL true. We do not need to explain away the Old Testament passages, nor to explain away these four passages from the New Testament. The New Testament Scriptures are not in opposition to the Old, and both are equally inspired.

Now these four passages, as we have seen, do not only seem to be opposed, but are DEFINITELY opposed, not to the passages quoted from the Old Testament by Dr. Bullinger, but to HIS wrong interpretations of them. We cannot understand how a Christian teacher, and scholar of his reputation, could be so blind to the plain truth of the Old Testament passages. The writers spoke of death as understood in THIS world, and in relation to its environments. In short, to what is "UNDER THE SUN."

For how could death be a "gain" to the Apostle Paul, if he ceased to exist-spirit, soul and body-and became non-existent till what Dr. Bullinger calls resurrection, for how could there be a resurrection of that which does not exist? 1 Cor. 15:42-44 says: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural BODY; it is raised a spiritual BODY."

That describes resurrection. What goes into the grave comes out, and there is a link between what is "sown" in corruption, dishonor, and weakness, and what comes forth in incorruption, power, and glory.

The question is asked, "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (1 Cor. 15:35). No question is asked about the soul. If the life of the soul ceased to exist, as well as the life of the body, as Dr. Bullinger states, why is the inquiry limited to the body? The very silence of Scripture is informative.

What "gain" does Dr. Bullinger get from his cheerless theory that there is no Intermediate State? What cheered millions of dying saints, from the days of the Coliseum in Rome, where the martyrs died to the cry of "Throw the Christians to the lions!" to the present time, was the thought that being "absent from the body" meant being "present with the Lord." That were indeed gain and the "far better" portion.

Paul would surely have chosen to have the company of the Lord in prison than to exchange it for non-existence at death. That were no gain.

The further we go in examining this theory that there is no Intermediate State, the more we wonder that Dr. Bullinger did not see through his folly.

Take the matter of the gift of eternal life. When a sinner believes on the Son of God he becomes the possessor of eternal life. What an absurd position the teaching of Dr. Bullinger would put the Apostle Paul in, to have eternal life for, say, 30 or 40 brief years of this life, then to die and become non-existent. What becomes of eternal life? Then after long centuries the resurrection comes. How can a non-existent person be raised? How can a nonentity possess eternal life? Eternal life is the inalienable portion of every believer, his portion in life, his portion when the body is dropped, his portion in resurrection, his portion forever, his portion uninterruptedly. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). That is, God does not change His mind, and give the believer eternal life, and then take it away, and do away with the very existence of the believer till the resurrection.

It is clear that Dr. Bullinger feels himself in a difficulty, and is under the necessity of explaining away this matter of eternal life being the inalienable and uninterrupted possession of the believer in Christ. He writes: "It is, of course, most blessedly true, that there is a vast difference between the saved and the unsaved in this 'falling asleep.' The former have received the gift of 'eternal life' (Rom. 6:23): not yet in actual fruition; but 'in Christ,' who is responsible to raise them from the dead (John 6:39), that they may enter upon the enjoyment of it" (p. 36). How can the doctor write such a denial of Scripture in the face of such plain unmistakable words? We read: "He that believeth on the Son

HATH everlasting life" (John 3:36). "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). How can you receive a gift, if it is not "in actual fruition?" Otherwise it would not be a gift, but only the promise of it. The believer has eternal life NOW, in present possession, and that on the authority of God's own Word. We prefer to believe God.

Dr. Bullinger says the gift of "eternal life" is "in. Christ," meaning that it is not in the believer in this life. It is true that the believer has it "in His [God's] Son" (1 John 5:11), as we have all blessings "in Christ," but Scripture plainly tells us that the believer "HATH" eternal life, and both statements are true, just as a leaf has life in it, but its life is in the tree. Our Lord says: "The water that I shall give him shall be IN HIM a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). So much for this glaring perversion of Scripture.

Dr. Bullinger's denial of the Intermediate State also does violence to the truth of the believer being sealed by the Spirit of God. We read: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION" (Eph. 4:30). The believer is here stated to be sealed "UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION." When is that? At the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when the sleeping saints shall be raised, and the living believers changed, and all caught up to be forever with the Lord, the day when believers will receive the redemption of their body (Rom. 8:23).

The believer is sealed when he receives what Eph. 1:13 describes as "the gospel of your salvation." The Scripture says he is sealed "UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION." Should the believer die, Dr. Bullinger says, he becomes non-existent. How can the Spirit of God seal what is non-existent? So according to his teaching the seal is broken. But Scripture does not say so, and we prefer to believe Scripture. The Apostle Paul is sealed "UNTO THE DAY OF REDEMPTION." Though "absent from the body," the believer, who has fallen asleep in Jesus, is "present with the Lord," in His blissful company, waiting for the "redemption of the body" (Rom. 8:23). So are all the departed saints, including Dr. Bullinger himself, who would surely rejoice in this pamphlet as a modest attempt to undo the mischief his theorizing is doing among Christian assemblies, could he know of it.

clickbible.org