

JND's Notes on Philippians

Part 1—Entire Epistle

Synopsis

Originally published in French—early 1850s

In the epistle to the Philippians we find much more of **Christian experience**, and the development of the exercise of the heart, than in the generality of the epistles. It is in fact proper Christian experience. Doctrine and practice are found in them all, but, with the exception of the second to Timothy which is of another nature, there is none that contains like this, the expression of the Christian's **experience** in this toilsome life, and the **resources** which are open to him in passing through it, and the **motives** which ought to govern him. We may even say that this epistle gives us the experience of Christian life in its highest and most perfect expression—say, rather, its normal condition under the power of the Spirit of God. God has condescended to furnish us with this beautiful picture of it, as well as with the truths that enlighten us, and the rules that direct our walk.

The **occasion** for it was quite natural. **Paul was in prison**, and the Philippians (who were very dear to him, and who, at the commencement of his labours, had testified their affection for him by similar gifts) had just **sent assistance** to the apostle **by the hand of Epaphroditus** at a moment when, as it appears, he had been for some time in need. A prison, need, the consciousness that the assembly of God was deprived of his watchful care, this expression on the part of the Philippians of the love that thought of him in his necessities, although at a distance—what could be more adapted to open the apostle's heart, and lead to his expressing the confidence in God that animated him, as well as what he felt with regard to the assembly, unsupported now by his apostolic care, and having to trust God Himself without any intermediate help? And it was most natural that he should pour out his feelings into the bosom of these beloved Philippians, who had just given him this proof of their affection. The apostle therefore speaks more than once of the Philippians' **fellowship with**

the gospel: that is to say, they took part in the labours, the trials, the necessities which the preaching of the gospel occasioned to those who devoted themselves to it. Their hearts united them to it—like those of whom the Lord speaks who received a prophet in the name of a prophet.

Chapter 1

This brought the apostle into a peculiarly intimate connection with this assembly; and he and Timotheus, who had accompanied him in his labours in Macedonia, his true son in the faith and in the work, address themselves to the saints and to those who bore office in this particular assembly. This is not an epistle which soars to the height of God's counsels, like that to the Ephesians, or which regulates the godly order which becomes Christians everywhere, like the two to the Corinthians; nor is it one which lays the foundation for the relationship of a soul with God, like that to the Romans. Neither was it destined to guard Christians against the errors that were creeping in among them, like some of the others which were written by our apostle. It takes the ground of the precious inner life, of the common affection of Christians towards each other, but of that affection as experienced in the heart of Paul, animated and directed by the Holy Ghost. Hence also we find the ordinary relationships which existed within an assembly: **there are bishops and deacons, and it was the more important to remember them, since the immediate care of the apostle was no longer possible. The absence of this immediate care forms the basis of the apostle's instructions here, and gives its peculiar importance to the epistle.**

The affection of the Philippians, which expressed itself by sending help to the apostle, reminded him of the spirit they had always shewn; they had cordially associated themselves with the labours and trials of the gospel. And this thought leads the apostle higher, to that which governs the current of thought (most precious to us) in the epistle. Who had wrought in the Philippians this spirit of love and of devotedness to the interests of the gospel? Truly it was the God of the glad tidings and of love; and this was a security that He who had begun the good work would fulfil it unto the day of Christ. Sweet thought!—

now that we have no longer the apostle, that we have no longer bishops and deacons, as the Philippians had in those days. God cannot be taken from us; the true and living source of all blessing remains to us, unchangeable, and above the infirmities, and even the faults, which deprive Christians of all intermediate resources. The apostle had seen God acting in the Philippians. The fruits bore witness of the source. Hence he counted on the perpetuity of the blessing they were to enjoy.¹ But there must be faith in order to draw these conclusions. 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.

To return to the principle—it is the same thing with the assembly of God. It may indeed lose much, as to outward means, and as to those manifestations of the presence of God, which are connected with man's responsibility; but the essential grace of God cannot be lost. Faith can always count upon it. It was the fruits of grace which gave the apostle this confidence, as in Hebrews 6:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 1:3-4. He counted indeed, in 1 Corinthians 1:8, and in Galatians, on the faithfulness of Christ in spite of many painful things. The faithfulness of the Lord encouraged him with regard to Christians, whose condition in other respects was the cause of great anxiety. But here—surely a much happier case—the walk itself of the Christian led him to the source of confidence about them. He remembered with affection and tenderness the way in which they had always acted towards him, and he turned it into a desire for them that the God who had wrought it would produce for their own blessing the perfect and abundant fruits of that love.

He opens his own heart also to them. They took part, by the same grace acting in them, in the work of God's grace in him, and that with an affection that identified itself with him and his work; and his heart turned to them with an abundant return of affection and desire. God, who created

¹ Read in verse 7 as in the margin, "because ye have me in your hearts."

these feelings, and to whom he presented all that passed in his heart, this same God who acted in the Philippians, was a witness between them (now that Paul could give no other by his labour among them) of his earnest desire for them all. He felt their love, but he desired moreover, that this love should be not only cordial and active, but that it should be guided also by wisdom and understanding from God, by a godly discernment of good and evil, wrought by the power of His Spirit; so that, while acting in love, they should also walk according to that wisdom, and should understand that which, in this world of darkness, was truly according to divine light and perfection, so that they should be without reproach until the day of Christ. How different from the cold avoidance of positive sin with which many Christians content themselves! The earnest desire of every excellence and likeness to Christ which divine light can shew them is that which marks the life of Christ in us.

Now the fruits produced were already a sign that God was with them; and He would fulfil the work unto the end. But the apostle desired that they should walk throughout the whole of the way according to the light that God had given, so that when they came to the end there should be nothing with which they could be reproached: but that, on the contrary, set free from all that might weaken or lead them astray, they should abound in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. A fine practical picture of the Christian's normal condition in his daily work towards the end; for, in the Philippians, we are always on the way towards our heavenly rest in which redemption has set us.

Such is the introduction to this epistle. After this expression of the wishes of his heart for them, reckoning on their affection, he speaks of his bonds, which they had remembered; but he does so in connection with Christ and the gospel, which he had most of all at heart. **But, before I go beyond the introduction into the matter of the epistle, I would notice the thoughts which lie at the foundation of the sentiments expressed in it.**

There are **three great elements** which stamp their character on it.

Firstly, it speaks of the Christian's **pilgrimage** in the wilderness; **salvation** is viewed as a result to be obtained at the end of the journey. Redemption accomplished by Christ is indeed established as the foundation of this pilgrimage (as was the case with Israel at their entrance into the wilderness), but the being presented risen and in glory before God, when victorious over every difficulty, is the subject in this epistle, and is that which is here called salvation.

In the **second** place, the position is characterised by the **apostle's absence**, the assembly having therefore itself to maintain the conflict. It had to overcome, instead of enjoying the victory gained over the enemy's power by the apostle when he was with them and could make himself weak with all who were weak.

And, **thirdly**, the important truth, already mentioned, is set forth, that the assembly, in these circumstances, was cast more immediately on **God—the inexhaustible source for it of grace and strength**, of which it was to avail itself in an immediate way by faith—a resource which could never fail it.²

I resume the consideration of the text with **verse 12**, which begins the epistle after the introductory portion. Paul was a prisoner at Rome. The enemy appeared to have gained a great victory in thus restraining his activity; but by the power of God, who orders all things and who acted in the apostle, even the devices of the adversary were turned to the furtherance of the gospel. In the first place, the

² We shall find the whole tenor of a life which was the expression of the power of the Spirit of God brought out in it. It marks this, that sin, or the flesh as working evilly in us, is not mentioned in the epistle. It gives the forms and features of the life of Christ; for if we live in the Spirit, we should walk in the Spirit. We shall find the graciousness of Christian life (ch.2), the energy of Christian life (ch.3), and its superiority to all circumstances (ch.4). The first more opens the apostle's heart as to his actual circumstances and feelings, as was natural. Exhortation begins with chapter 2. Still even in chapter 1 we find the apostle entirely superior to circumstances in the power of spiritual life.

imprisonment of the apostle made the gospel known, where it would not otherwise have been preached, in high places at Rome; and many other brethren, reassured as to the apostle's position,³ became more bold to preach the gospel without fear. But there was another way in which this absence of the apostle had an effect. Many—who, in the presence of his power and his gifts, were necessarily powerless and insignificant persons—could make themselves of some importance, when, in the unsearchable but perfect ways of God, this mighty instrument of His grace was set aside. They could hope to shine and attract attention when the rays of this resplendent light were intercepted by the walls of a prison. Jealous but hidden when he was present, they availed themselves of his absence to bestir themselves; whether false brethren or jealous Christians, they sought in his absence to impair his authority in the assembly, and his happiness. They only added to both. God was with His servant; and, instead of the self-seeking which instigated these sorry preachers of the truth, there was found in Paul the pure desire for the proclamation of the good news of Christ, the whole value of which he deeply felt, and which he desired above all, be it in what way it might.

Already the apostle finds his resource for his own case, in God's operating independently of the spiritual order of His house with regard to the means that He uses. The normal condition of the assembly is that the Spirit of God acts in the members of the body, each one in its place, for the manifestation of the unity of the body and of the reciprocal energy of its members. Christ, having overcome Satan, fills with His own Spirit those whom He has delivered out of the hand of that enemy, in order that they may exhibit at the same time the power of God and the truth of their deliverance from the power of the enemy,

³ In the first edition I had taken this as the effect of the apostle's imprisonment in arousing the faith of those inactive when he was active. And this would be the sense of the English translation and is a true principle. But it seems that the force of the words is "rather got confidence as to my bonds." They were in danger of being ashamed of him, as if he were a malefactor.

and exhibit them in a walk, which, being an expression of the mind and energy of God Himself, leaves no room for those of the enemy. They constituted the army and the testimony of God in this world against the enemy. But then, each member, from an apostle down to the weakest, acts efficaciously in his own place. The power of Satan is excluded. The exterior answers to the interior, and to the work of Christ. He who is in them is greater than he who is in the world. But everywhere power is needed for this, and the single eye. There is another state of things, in which, although all is not in activity in its place, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, yet the restoring energy of the Spirit in an instrument like the apostle defends the assembly, or brings it back into its normal condition, when it has partially failed. The epistle to the Ephesians, on the one side, and those to the Corinthians and Galatians, on the other, present these two phases of the history of the assembly.

The epistle to the Philippians treats—but with the pen of a divinely inspired apostle—of a state of things in which this last resource was wanting. The apostle could not labour now in the same manner as before, but he could give us the Spirit's view of the state of the assembly, when, according to the wisdom of God, it was deprived of these normal energies. It could not be deprived of God. Doubtless the assembly had not then departed so far from its normal condition as it has now done, but the evil was already springing up. All seek their own, says the apostle, not the things of Jesus Christ; and God allowed it to be so during the life of the apostles, in order that we might have the revelation of His thoughts respecting it, and that we might be directed to the true resources of His grace in these circumstances.

Paul himself had to experience this truth in the first place. The bonds that united him to the assembly and to the work of the gospel were the strongest that exist on earth; but he was obliged to resign the gospel and the assembly to the God to whom they belonged. This was painful; but its effect was to perfect obedience, trust, singleness of eye, and self-renunciation, in the heart, that is, to perfect them according to the measure of the operation of faith.

Nevertheless the pain caused by such an effort betrays the inability of man to maintain the work of God at its own height. But all this happens in order that God may have the whole glory of the work; and it is needed, in order that the creature may be manifested in every respect according to the truth. And it is most blessed to see how, both here and in 2 Timothy, the decay of individual life and ecclesiastical energy brings out a fuller development of personal grace on one hand and ministerial energy on the other, where there is faith, than is found anywhere else. Indeed it is always so. The Moseses, and Davids, and Elijahs are found in the time of the Pharaohs, and Sauls, and Ahabs.

The apostle could do nothing: he had to see the gospel preached without him—by some through envy and in a spirit of contention, by others through love; encouraged as regards the apostle's bonds, these desired to alleviate them by continuing his work. Every way Christ was preached, and the apostle's mind rose above the motives which animated the preachers in the contemplation of the immense fact, that a Saviour, the deliverer sent of God, was preached to the world. Christ, and even souls were more precious to Paul than the work's being carried on by himself. God was carrying it on; and therefore it would be for the triumph of Paul, who linked himself with the purposes of God.⁴ He understood the great conflict which was going on between Christ (in his members) and the enemy; and if the latter appeared to have gained a victory by putting Paul in prison, God was using this event for the advancement of the work of Christ by the gospel, and thus in reality for the gaining of fresh victories over Satan—victories with which Paul was associated, since he was set for the defence of that gospel. Therefore all this turned to his salvation, his faith being confirmed by these ways of a faithful God, who directed the eyes of His faithful servant more entirely upon Himself. Sustained by the prayers of

⁴ There is blessed faith in this. But then a man must have made the work his life. "To me to live is Christ." If so, if the work prospers, he prospers; if Christ is glorified, he is content, even if the Lord has laid him aside.

others and by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, instead of being cast down and terrified by the enemy, he gloried more and more in the sure victory of Christ in which he shared. Accordingly he expresses his unchangeable conviction, that in nothing should he be made ashamed, but that it would be given him to use all boldness, and that Christ would be glorified in him, whether by his life or his death; and he had death before his eyes. Called to appear before Caesar, his life might be taken from him by the emperor's judgment; humanly speaking the issue was quite uncertain. He alludes to this, chapter 1:22, 30; 2:17; 3:10. But, living or dying, his eye was now more fixed on Christ than even on the work, high placed as that work might have been in the mind of one whose life could be expressed in this one word—"Christ." To live was for him—not the work in itself, nor only that the faithful should stand fast in the gospel, although this could not be separated from the thought of Christ, because they were members of His body—Christ; to die was gain, for he should be with Christ.

Such was the purifying effect of the ways of God, who had made him pass through the ordeal, so terrible to him, of being separated for years, perhaps four, from his work for the Lord. The Lord Himself had taken the place of the work—so far at least as it was connected with Paul individually; and the work was committed to the Lord Himself. Possibly the fact that he was so engrossed with the work had contributed to that which led to his imprisonment; for the thought of Christ alone keeps the soul in equilibrium, and gives everything its right place. God caused this imprisonment to be the means through which Christ became his all. Not that he lost his interest in the work, but that Christ alone held the first place; and he saw everything, and even the work, in Christ.

What consolation it is, when we are perhaps conscious that our weakness has been manifested, and that we have failed in acting according to the power of God, to feel that He, who alone has a right to be glorified, never fails!

Now, since Christ was everything to Paul, it was evident gain to die, for he would be with Him. Nevertheless it was worth while to live (for this is the force of the first part of

verse 21), because it was Christ and His service; and he did not know which to choose. Dying, he gained Christ for himself: it was far better. Living, he served Christ; he had more, as to the work, since to live was Christ, and death of course would put a stop to that. Thus he was in a strait between the two. But he had learnt to forget himself in Christ; and he saw Christ entirely occupied with the assembly according to His perfect wisdom. And this decided the question; for being thus taught of God, and not knowing for himself which to choose, Paul lost sight of himself, and thought only of the need of the assembly according to the mind of Christ. It was good for the assembly that he should remain—for one assembly even: thus he should remain. And see what peace this looking to Jesus, which destroyed selfishness in the work, gives to the servant of God. After all, Christ has all power in heaven and earth, and He orders all things according to His will. Thus when His will is known—and His will is love for the assembly—one can say that it will be done.

Paul decides as to his own fate, without troubling himself as to either what the emperor would do, or the circumstances of the time. Christ loved the assembly. It was good for the assembly that Paul should remain; Paul shall then remain. How entirely Christ is everything here!

What light, what rest, from a single eye, from a heart versed in the Lord's love! How blessed to see self so totally gone, and Christ's love to the assembly seen thus to be the ground on which all is ordered!

Now if Christ is all this for Paul and for the assembly, Paul desires that the assembly should be that which it ought to be for Christ, and thereby for his own heart to which Christ was everything. To the assembly therefore the apostle's heart turns. The joy of the Philippians would be abundant through his return to them; only let their conduct, whether he came or not, be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Two thoughts possessed his mind, whether he should see them or hear tidings of them, that they might have constancy and firmness in unity of heart and mind among themselves; and be devoid of fear with regard to the enemy, in the conflict they had to maintain against him, with the strength that this unity would give them.

This is the testimony of the presence and operation of the Spirit in the assembly, when the apostle is absent. He keeps Christians together by His presence; they have but one heart and one object. They act in common by the Spirit. And, since God is there, the fear with which the evil spirit and their enemies might inspire them (and it is what he ever seeks to do; compare 1 Peter 5: 8) is not there. They walk in the spirit of love and power and of a sound mind. Their condition is thus an evident testimony of salvation—entire and final deliverance—since in their warfare with the enemy they feel no fear, the presence of God inspiring them with other thoughts. With regard to their adversaries, the discovery of the impotence of all their efforts produces the sense of the insufficiency of their resources. Although they had the whole power of the world and of its prince, they had met with a power superior to their own—the power of God, and they were its adversaries. A terrible conviction on the one side; profound joy on the other, where not only there was thus the assurance of deliverance and salvation, but they were proved to be salvation and deliverance from the hand of God Himself. Thus, that the assembly should be in conflict, and the apostle absent (himself wrestling with all the power of the enemy), was a gift. Joyful thought! unto them it was given to suffer for Christ, as well as to believe in Him. They had a further and a precious portion in suffering with Christ, and even for Christ; and communion with His faithful servant in suffering for His sake united them more closely in Him.

Note, here, how thus far we have the testimony of the Spirit to a life above the flesh, not of it. In nothing he had been ashamed, and fully trusted he never should be, but Christ magnified in his body, were his lot life or death, as He ever had been. He does not know whether to choose life or death, both were so blessed; to live, Christ; to die, gain, though then labour was over; such confidence in Christ's love to the assembly that he decides his case before Nero by what that love would produce. Envy and strife against himself leading some to preach Christ would only turn to victorious results for himself: he was content if Christ was preached. The superiority to the flesh, living

above it so completely, was not that it was not there or its nature changed. He had, as we learn elsewhere, a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him. But it is a glorious testimony to the power and working of the Spirit of God.

Chapter 2

But this, too, produced its effects. The apostle desired that their joy should be full, and that unity among the Philippians should be perfect; for his absence had allowed some seeds of disunion and disaffection to germinate. Love had been sweetly and powerfully demonstrated by the gift they had sent to the apostle. Consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, tender mercies were displayed in it, giving him great joy. Let them then make this joy perfect by the full establishment of this same bond of love among themselves, by being of one accord, of one mind, having the same love for each other, being all like-minded, allowing no rivalry or vain-glory to display itself in any way. Such was the apostle's desire. Appreciating their love towards himself, he wished their happiness to be complete through the perfecting of that love among themselves: thus would his own joy be perfect. Beautiful and touching affection! It was love in him which, sensible to their love, thought only of them. How delicate the way in which a kindness, which precluded reproof, made a way for what really was one, and which a heart that added charity to brotherly love could not leave unuttered!

Now the means of this union, of the maintenance of this love, was found in the abnegation of self, in humility, in the spirit that humbles itself in order to serve. It was this which perfectly displayed itself in Christ, in contrast with the first Adam. The latter sought to make himself like God by robbery, when he was in the form of a man, and strove to exalt himself at God's expense; being at the same time disobedient unto death. Christ, on the contrary, when He was in the form of God, emptied Himself, through love, of all His outward glory, of the form of God, and took the form of a man; and, even when He was in the form of a man, still humbled Himself. It was a second thing which He did in humbling Himself. As God, He emptied

Himself; as man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. God has highly exalted Him; for he who exalts himself shall be humbled? but he who humbles himself shall be exalted. Perfect love, glorious truth, precious obedience! A man by the just judgment and act of God is exalted to the right hand of the throne of the divine Majesty. What a truth is the Person of Christ! What a truth is this descent and ascension by which He fills all things as Redeemer and Lord of glory! God come down in love, man ascended in righteousness; entire love in coming down, entire obedience by love also. Worthy from all eternity as to His Person to be there, He is now as man exalted by God to His right hand. It is an act of righteousness on God's part that He is there; and our hearts can take part in it, rejoicing in His glory—rejoicing also that by grace we have part in it as to our own place.

His humiliation is a proof that He is God. God only could leave His first estate in the sovereign rights of His love; it is sin for any creature to do so. It is also a perfect love. But this proof is given, this love accomplished, in the fact that He is man. What a place has He acquired for us in Himself! But it is of Him, not of us who are its fruits, that the apostle thinks. He rejoices in the thought of Christ's exaltation. God has exalted Him to the highest place, and given Him a name which is above every name, so that everything in heaven and earth, and even in infernal regions, must bow before this exalted man, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

It will be remarked here, that it is the lordship of Christ that is presented in this passage, not His divinity in itself. His divinity is indeed the primary point of departure. All in fact has its origin there—the love, the self-renunciation, the humiliation, the marvellous condescension. Nothing of all this could have been, or would have its value, without the former; but it is of the Lord, complete in His Person in the position which He took as man—it is of Him who humbled Himself, who when He had gone down to the lowest possible place, was exalted by God; it is of Jesus, who could, without exalting Himself, be equal with God,

but who emptied Himself, who went down even into death, that the apostle speaks: of Jesus, Lord of all, and who, thus exalted as man, shall be owned as Lord throughout the whole creation to the glory of God the Father.⁵

The apostle's heart enlarges whenever he speaks of the Lord Jesus; but he turns to the objects of his solicitude; and as he had spoken of the self-renunciation and the humiliation of Christ, as a means of union which would take all occasion from carnal rivalry, he has also been led to speak of **the obedience of Christ** in contrast with the first Adam and the flesh. He now **applies this principle**, also, for the instruction of the Philippians: "**Wherefore,**" he says, "my beloved, as ye have always **obeyed.**" And here the effect of his absence and removal from the work is introduced— "not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for," he adds, "it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do." That is to say, while he was among them he had laboured; now they were themselves engaged with the enemy, without the aid of Paul's presence and spiritual energy; but God Himself wrought in them, and they ought to work so much the more earnestly in that they found themselves in such a warfare, God Himself being engaged for them as acting in them for this conflict, and they themselves striving in their own persons, directly with the power of the enemy. This was not the moment to boast in their little gifts, on account of the absence of that which had thrown them into the shade, nor to be at strife among themselves. On the

⁵ Observe also, that **it is not with regard to that which He suffered, as the effect of His submission to the will of God in the position which He took, that Christ is here presented as our pattern. It is in His voluntary humiliation**, the fact that in love He took the last—the lowest-place, that we are called to follow Him. Love serves, love humbles itself—readily takes the meanest position (meanest according to the pride of man) in order to serve, and delights in it. Christ acted from love; He chose to serve. Christ chose to take the low place—He who was able to humble Himself—and we?

other hand, if they were deprived of Paul, they were not deprived of God. God Himself wrought in them. This is the great principle, and the great consolation of the epistle. The Christians, deprived of the important aid of the apostle, are cast more immediately on God. The apostle himself, separated from the assembly, finds his own consolation in God; and commits the assembly in its lack of his personal care, to God Himself, in whom he had himself found this consolation.

It is to be carefully remarked here, that it is the very opposite of an exhortation to our own working in contrast with God's effectual power. "Your own" is in contrast with Paul in his absence, who had laboured for them, because God did work in them to will and to do. They were to work, because, if Paul was absent, God wrought in them. I have noticed already that **salvation**, every blessing, is looked at everywhere in this epistle as at the end of **the Christian's course**, even the manifestation of their righteousness (ch.3: 9). This passage is an example. **There are two ways the Christian is seen in the New Testament. In Christ—here is no progress, no question: he is accepted in Him—a complete, perfect, present state. But he is also a pilgrim upon earth, having to attain the goal: so always in Philippians.** This gives occasion to every kind of exhortation, warning and "if." Thus he learns obedience and dependence—the two characteristics of the new man. But with this he is led to the sure infallible faithfulness of God to bring him through to the end, and bound to reckon on it. See 1 Corinthians 1: 8, which I cite because they were going on very badly; but passages abound.

Diligence and earnestness ought to characterise the walk of Christians in these circumstances, in which immediate connection with God and personal conflict with the enemy have to be realised.

The apostle returns to the spirit of meekness and peace, in which the fruits of righteousness are sown. "Do all things," he says, "without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life": **a very striking passage, because it will be found that**

in every member of the sentence it is an exact statement of what Christ was. Whatever may be the circumstances in which the assembly is found, such, as respects itself, should ever be its state and its walk. Grace sufficient for this is ever there in Christ.

Unity of spirit among themselves by grace, and a walk according to God, in order that they may be as heavenly lights amid the moral darkness of this world—always carrying, and thus holding forth, the word of life: such was the apostle's desire. They would thus give proof by the constancy and practical effect of their faith, that the apostle had not run or laboured in vain; and they would themselves be his glory in the day of Christ. Oh, if the assembly had continued such! Be that as it may, Christ will be glorified. The apostle thus unites his work and the reward in the day of Christ with the blessing of the assembly. He would not be separated from it in his death. This union of heart and faith is very touching. He presents himself as capable of being poured out (that is to say, his life) upon the sacrifice and service of the Philippians' faith. They had shewn their devotedness to Christ in thinking even of His servant; and he looks upon all their faith as an offering to the Saviour and to God; looking at them, Christ's people, as the substance of the offering, the great thing, himself only as a libation—his life poured out upon the offering. Perhaps his life would be poured out in the service of the gospel, to which they consecrated themselves on their part, and be a seal to this offering of theirs, which was dedicated to God by this sacred bond with the apostle. He rejoiced, if it were so, that his life was poured out: it would crown his work for the Gentiles. He desires too that they also in the same spirit should rejoice in the same thing. It was all one thing, their faith and his, and their common service, offered to God, and well-pleasing to Him; and the most exalted proof of it should be the source of the most sacred joy. This world was not the real scene of that which was going on: what we behold here in connection with the divine work is but the outside. The apostle speaks this language of faith, which ever sees things as before God.

Nevertheless his watchful care did not cease, although he committed the Philippians to God. It is always thus. The love and the faith which commit everything to God do not cease to think according to God of that which is dear to Him. Thus in 1 John, chapter 2, the apostle, while saying that the little children in Christ needed not that any one should teach them, yet instructs them with all tenderness and foresight. Here also the apostle, full of holy solicitude for these souls who were dear to Christ, hopes soon to send Timotheus that he may know their state. But the condition of things is evident. He sends Timotheus because he had no one else in whose heart the same feelings towards them flowed forth from the same spring of love. All sought their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. What an exercise for faith! But what an occasion for its exercise!

Still, with regard to Timotheus, these beloved Philippians should receive him with a heart that responded to the apostle's confidence. They knew how he had served Paul in the gospel. The bonds of love in the gospel are but the stronger—God be praised—when all grows cold. And observe, that God carried on His work, when as to the common testimony of the assembly, everything failed through a coldness which oppressed the apostle's heart; for God does not weary in His work. This bond however does not fail here with the Philippians either. As soon as Paul knew how it would go with himself, he would send Timotheus to them; but, as he had said, he had confidence in the Lord that he himself should come shortly.

But there was also Epaphroditus, who had come from the Philippians to carry their testimonial of affection to the apostle; and who, the faithful instrument and expression of their love, had risked his own life and suffered from dangerous sickness, in order to accomplish their service. This fine testimony of Christian love breaks out here on every side. Epaphroditus so counts upon the love of the Philippians, that he is much troubled, because they had heard he was sick. He reckons on the feeling they had towards him—the place he had in their affections. Would it not be thus with an affectionate son, who knew that his mother had heard such tidings of him? He would hasten to

inform her of his recovery, in order to tranquillise a heart whose love he knew. Such is Christian affection, tender and simple, confiding, because pure and unsuspicious, and walking in the light of God—walking with Him and in the affections which Christ had consecrated as man. Divine love, no doubt, goes higher; but brotherly love, which acts before men and as the fruit among men of that divine love, displays itself thus in grace.

The apostle responds to this affection of the Philippians for him who taught them and laboured in the Lord for them (the Holy Ghost also remembers it here), and he sends back Epaphroditus, encouraging and seeking to sustain this feeling in the heart of the Philippians. He takes part in it himself, and brings into it God's own tender love. Paul would have had sorrow upon sorrow (and he had much already), if the Philippians had lost their beloved servant and messenger by means of the services he had rendered them; but God had spared Epaphroditus and the apostle himself. He would however have them assured of it by the presence of Epaphroditus again among them; and thus the apostle's own heart freed from all anxiety, would be also relieved. What a picture of mutual love and kind solicitude!

And observe the ways in which God, according to the apostle, takes part in it. What are presented to us here are His compassions, not the counsels of His love, but compassions worthy of God, and affections of which He approves among men. These affections and this value for labourers are sometimes feared; and so much the more so, because the assembly has in fact to disentangle itself from all false dependence on man. But it is in the entire failure of manifested strength and outward organised bond, through the apostle's absence, that the Spirit of God develops the play of these inward affections and bonds for the instruction of the assembly; as he acknowledges all that remains of the ruins of its primitive position and its outward bonds. He does not create these anew; but he acknowledges that which still exists. It is only the first verse of the epistle which speaks of this—no more was needed; but the inward bonds he develops largely, not as doctrine, but as fact. God Himself, the apostle, his faithful

Timotheus, the valued servant of the Philippians, who was so dear to them, and the fellow-labourer of Paul, the servant of the Lord, the Philippians themselves, all have their part in this precious and beautiful chain of love. The graciousness of the Christian life is thus developed in every part of this chapter; the delicacy of his reproof of the spirit of division; his sending Timothy when he can let them know how it went with him, but Epaphroditus at once because they had heard he had been sick. This graciousness, and consideration of others, note, connects itself with a Christ who humbles Himself. A lowly Christ humbling Himself from Godhead-form down to death, is the spring of lowly graciousness; an exalted One sought in glory, the spring of energy which counts all to be dross and dung to win Him.

Chapter 3

After all it was in the Lord Himself that they had to rejoice, and the apostle now puts them on their guard against that which had eaten away the life of the assembly, and produced the painful fruits that filled his heart with anguish, and the deplorable consequences of which we see at this day, even as he foretold—consequences which will yet ripen for the judgment of God. Be this as it may, the Lord does not change. “Rejoice,” he says, “in the Lord.” There all is sure.

That which might prevent their thus rejoicing is developed, as well as the true knowledge of Christ, which preserves us from it: not here according to the doctrine and the practice that belong to the high position of the assembly’s union with a glorified Christ as His body, nor according to the unity which flows from it. This is the subject of the Ephesians. Neither is it according to the urgent necessity of cleaving to the Head, because all fulness is in Him. This is the instruction of the epistle to the Colossians. But, in accordance with the general character of the epistle, the subject is here treated in connection with the personal experiences of the Christian, and, in particular, of the apostle. Accordingly—as was seen in his personal combats and sorrow—he finds himself on the road to the full enjoyment of this object whom he has learnt to know, and the state which his heart

desires. This ought to be the Christian's experience, for, if I am united by the Spirit to the Head as a member of the body of Christ, and if by faith I apprehend this union, it is none the less true that my personal experience (although this faith is its basis) is necessarily in connection with the paths which I follow in order to reach the glory this entitles me to. Not that the sentiments awakened by that which I encounter on this path either falsify or contradict my position in Christ, or destroy the certainty of my starting-point. But, while possessing this certainty, and because I possess it, I know that I have not in fact reached the result of this position in glory. Now, in this epistle, we are on the road, we are individualised in our relations with God; for experience is always individual, although our union with each other as members of Christ forms a part of this experience.

In chapter 3 Paul resumes his exhortation; but it was not burdensome to him, and it was safe for them (danger being present and his tender love watchful), to renew his warnings and instructions respecting the admixture of Judaising principles with the doctrine of a glorified Christ. It was in fact to destroy the latter and to reinstate the flesh (that is, sin and alienation from God) in its place. It was the first man, already rejected and condemned, and not the second Man. Yet it is not in the shape of sin that the flesh appears here, but in that of righteousness, of all that is respectable and religious, of ordinances which had the venerable weight of antiquity attached to them, and as to their origin, if all had not been done away in Christ, the authority of God Himself.

To the apostle, who knew Christ in heaven, all this was but a bait to draw the Christian away from Christ, and throw him back again into the ruin out of which Christ had drawn him. And this would be so much the worse, because it would be to abandon a known and glorified Christ, and to return to that which had been proved to be of no value through the flesh. The apostle therefore spares neither the doctrine nor those who taught it.

The glory which he had seen, his contests with these false teachers, the state into which they had thrown the assembly, Jerusalem and Rome, his liberty and his

prison—all, had gained him the experience of what Judaism was worth as to the assembly of God. They were dogs, evil workers, that is workers of malice and wickedness. It was not the circumcision. He treats it with profound contempt, and uses language, the harshness of which is justified by his love for the assembly; for love is severe towards those who, devoid of conscience, corrupt the object of that love. It was the concision.

When evil without shame, and labouring to produce evil under a disgraceful veil of religion, is manifested in its true character, mildness is a crime against the objects of the love of Christ. If we love Him, we shall in our intercourse with the assembly give the evil its true character, which it seeks to hide. This is real love and faithfulness to Christ. The apostle had certainly not failed in condescension to the weak in this respect. He had carried it far; his prison testified it. And now the assembly, deprived of his energy and that spiritual decision which was full of love to all which is good, was more in danger than ever. The experience of a whole life of activity, of the greatest patience, of four years' reflection in prison, led to these forcible and urgent words, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." The doctrine of the epistle to the Ephesians, the exhortation of that to the Colossians, the affection of that to these Philippians, with the denunciation contained in chapter 3:2, date from the same epoch, and are marked with the same love.

But it sufficed to denounce them. Elsewhere, where they were not well known, he gave details, as in the case of Timotheus, who had still to watch over the assembly. It was sufficient now to point out their well-known character. Whatever Judaised, whatever sought to mingle law and gospel, trusting in ordinances and the Spirit, was shameless, malicious, and contemptible.⁶ But the apostle will rather occupy himself with the power that delivers from it. We are the circumcision (that which is really separate from the evil, that which is dead to sin and to the

⁶ [GQ] A reference to 'dogs, evil workmen, the concision'.

flesh), we who worship God, not in the false pretension of ordinances, but spiritually by the power of the Holy Ghost, who rejoice in Christ the Saviour and not in the flesh, but on the contrary have no confidence in it. We see here Christ and the Spirit in contrast with the flesh and self.

Paul might indeed boast, if needful, in that which belonged to the flesh. As to all Jewish privileges, he possessed them in the highest degree. He had outstript every one in holy zeal against innovators. **One thing alone had changed it all—he had seen a glorified Christ.** All that he had according to the flesh was thenceforth loss to him. It would place something between him and the Christ of his faith and of his desire—the Christ whom he knew. And, observe, that here it is not the sins of the flesh which Christ expiates and abolishes that he rejects; it is its righteousness. It has none, we may say; but even if the apostle had possessed any righteousness of the flesh—as, in fact, he did possess it outwardly—he would not have it, because he had seen a better. **In Christ, who had appeared to him on the way to Damascus, he had seen divine righteousness for man, and divine glory in man.** He had seen a glorified Christ, who acknowledged the poor feeble members of the assembly as a part of Himself. He would have nothing else. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord had eclipsed everything—changed everything which was not that into loss. The stars, as well as the darkness of night, disappear before the sun. The righteousness of the law, the righteousness of Paul, all that distinguished him among men, disappeared before the righteousness of God and the glory of Christ.

It was a thorough change in his whole moral being. His gain was now loss to him. Christ was become all. It was not evil which disappeared—everything that belonged to Paul as advantage to the flesh disappeared. It was another who was now precious to him. What a deep and radical change in the whole moral being of man, when he ceases to be the centre of his own importance; and another, a worthy of being so, becomes the centre of his moral existence!—a divine person, a man who had glorified God, a man in whom the glory of God shone out, to the

eye of faith; in whom His righteousness was realised, His love, His tender mercy, perfectly revealed towards men and known by men. This was He whom Paul desired to win, to possess—for here we are still in the paths of the wilderness—he desired to be found in Him: “That I may win Christ, and be found in him.” Two things were present to his faith in this desire: to have the righteousness of God Himself as his (in Christ he should possess it); and then, to know Him and the power of His resurrection—for he only knew Him as risen—and, according to that power working in him now, to have part in the sufferings of Christ, and be made conformable to His death.

It was in His death that perfect love had been demonstrated, that the perfect ground of divine and eternal righteousness had been laid, that self-renunciation was practically, entirely, perfectly, manifested in Christ, the perfect object to the apostle of a faith that apprehended it and desired it according to the new man. Christ had passed through death in the perfection of that life, the power of which was manifested in resurrection.

Paul, having seen this perfection in glory, and being united (weak as he was in himself) to Christ the source of this power, desired to know the power of His resurrection, that he might follow Him in His sufferings. Circumstances held this as a reality before his eyes. His heart only saw, or wished to see, Christ, that he might follow Him there. If death was on the way, he was only so much the more like Christ. He did not mind what it cost, if by any means he might attain. This gave undivided energy of purpose. This is indeed to know Him, as completely put to the test, and thus to know all that He was, His perfection—of love, of obedience, of devotedness—fully manifested; but the object is to win Him as He is.

Having seen Him in the glory, the apostle understood the path which had led Him there, and the perfection of Christ in that path. Participating in His life, he desired to realise its power according to His glory, that he might follow Him, in order to be where Jesus was, and in the glory with Him. This is what the Lord said in **John 12:23-26**. Who had apprehended Him like Paul by the grace of God? **Observe here the difference between him and Peter. Peter**

calls himself “a witness of the sufferings of Christ and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed”; Paul, a witness of the glory as it is in heaven (“as he is,” as John says), desires to share his sufferings. It is the special foundation of the assembly’s place, of walking in the Spirit, according to the revelation of the glory of Christ. It is this, I doubt not, which makes Peter say, that in all Paul’s epistles—which he acknowledges moreover as a part of the scriptures—there are some things hard to be understood. It took man clean out of the whole ancient order of things.

Having then seen Christ in glory, there were two things for Paul—the righteousness of God in Christ, and the knowledge of Christ. The first entirely eclipsed everything of which the flesh could boast. This was “mine own,” the righteousness of man according to the law. The other was the righteousness of God, which is by faith; that is, man is nothing in it. It is God’s righteousness: man has part in it by believing, that is to say, by faith in Christ Jesus. The believer has his place before God in Christ, in the righteousness of God Himself, which He had manifested in glorifying Christ, having glorified Himself in Him. What a position! not only sin, but human righteousness, all that is of self, excluded; our place being according to the perfection in which Christ, as man, has perfectly glorified God. But this place is necessarily the place of Him who has accomplished this glorious work. Christ, in His Person and in His present position,⁷ is the expression of our place: to know Him is to know it. He is there according to divine righteousness. To be there, as He is, is that into which divine righteousness freely, but necessarily, introduces man—introduces us—in Christ. Thenceforth, having seen the righteousness of God in that Christ is there, I desire myself to know what it is to be there: and I desire to know Christ. But in truth this embraces all that He was in accomplishing it. The glory reveals the power and the result. That which He suffered

⁷ Not, of course, as to being at the right hand of God—this was personal.

is the work in which He glorified God; so that divine righteousness has been fulfilled in His exaltation, as man, to divine glory. And here divine love, perfect devotedness to His Father's glory, constant and perfect obedience, the endurance of all things in order to give testimony of His Father's love for men, perfect patience, unfathomable sufferings, in order that love might be both possible and perfect for sinners—all in short that Christ was, being connected with His Person, makes Him an object which commands, possesses, delivers, and strengthens the heart, by the power of His grace acting in the new life, in which we are united to Him by the all-powerful link of the Spirit, and causes Him to be the alone object before our eyes.

Accordingly Paul desires to have that which Christ can give, His cup, and His baptism; and to leave to the Father, that which Christ left to Him, the disposal of places in the kingdom. He does not desire, like John and James, the right and left hand, that is, a good place for himself. He desires Christ, he would win Christ. He does not follow tremblingly, as the disciples did in that chapter (Mark 10); he desires to suffer—not, that is, for the sake of suffering, but to have part in the sufferings of Christ. Instead therefore of going away like the young man in the same chapter, because he had much that could profit the flesh, instead of clinging like him to the law for his righteousness, he renounces that righteousness which he had in common with the young man; and all that he had he counted but as dung.

Here then we have the practical personal experience of the operation of this great principle, which the apostle has set forth in other epistles, that we have part with a glorified Christ. Also, in telling of the result as to himself, he speaks of his own resurrection according to the character of Christ's. It is not that of which Peter speaks, as we have seen, the simply participating in the glory that was to be revealed. It is that which precedes. Having seen Christ in the glory, according to the power of His resurrection, he desires to participate in that: and this is the force of his word, "if by any means." He desired to have part in the resurrection from among the dead. If, in order to reach it, it was needful to pass through death (as Christ had done),

he would go through it, cost what it might, be it in ever so painful a way—and death was at that time before his eyes with its human terror: he desired fully to take part with Christ.

Now it is the character of this resurrection that it is from among the dead; it is not simply the resurrection of the dead. It is to come out, by the favour and the power of God (as it regards Christ, and indeed us too by Him, by the righteousness of God), from the condition of evil into which sin had plunged men—to come out, after having been dead in sins, and now to sin, through the favour and power and righteousness of God. What grace! and what a difference! By following Christ according to the will of God, in the place where He has set us (and to be content with the lowest place, if God has given it us, is the same renunciation of self as to labour in the highest—the secret of each is, that Christ is everything and ourselves nothing), we participate in His resurrection—a thought full of peace and joy, and which fills the heart with love to Christ. Joyful and glorious hope, which shines before our eyes in Christ, and in that blessed Saviour glorified! The objects of divine favour in Him, we come forth—because the eye of God is upon us, because we are His—from the house of death, which cannot detain those who are His, because the glory and the love of God are concerned in them. Christ is the example and the pattern of our resurrection; the principle (Rom.8) and the assurance of our resurrection is in Him. The road to it is that which the apostle here traces.

But since resurrection and likeness to Christ in glory were the objects of his hope, it is very evident that he had not attained it. If that was his perfection, he could not be yet perfect. He was, as has been said, on the road; but Christ had apprehended him for it, and he still pressed onward to lay hold of the prize, for the enjoyment of which Christ had laid hold of him. No, he repeats to his brethren, I count not myself to have attained. But one thing at least he could say—he forgot all that was behind him, and pressed on ever towards the goal, keeping it always in sight to obtain the prize of the calling of God, which is found in heaven. Happy Christian! It is a great thing never to lose

sight of it, never to have a divided heart, to think but of one thing; to act, to think, always according to the positive energy wrought by the Holy Ghost in the new man, directing him to this only and heavenly object. It is not his sins properly which he here says he forgot—it was his progress that he forgot, his advantages, all that was already behind. And this was not merely the energy that shewed itself at the first impulse; he *still* counted everything but as dung, because he had still Christ in view. This is true Christian life. What a sad moment would it have been for Rebecca, if, in the midst of the desert with Eliezer, she had forgotten Isaac, and begun to think again of Bethuel and her father's house! What had she then in the desert with Eliezer?

Such is the true life and position of the Christian; even as the Israelites, although preserved by the blood from the messenger of judgment, were not in their true place till they were on the other side of the Red Sea, a freed people. Then he is on the road to Canaan, as belonging to God.

The Christian, until he understands this new position which Christ has taken as risen from the dead, is not spiritually in its true place, is not perfect or full-grown in Christ. But when he has attained this, it is not assuredly that he is to despise others. "If," says the apostle, "they were otherwise minded, God would reveal" to them the fulness of His truth; and all were to walk together with one mind in the things to which they had attained. Where the eye was single, it would be so: there were many with whom this was not the case; but the apostle was their example. This was saying much. While Jesus lived the peculiar power of this resurrection life could not be revealed in the same way; and moreover while on earth Christ walked in the consciousness of that which He was with His Father before the world existed, so that, although He endured for the joy that was set before Him, although His life was the perfect pattern of the heavenly man, there was in Him a repose, a communion, which had quite a peculiar character; instructive nevertheless to us, because the Father loves us as He loved Jesus, and Jesus also loves us as the Father loved Him. With Him it was not the energy of one who must run the race in order to attain that

which he has never yet possessed; He spoke of that which He knew, and bore witness of that which He had seen, of that which He had forsaken from love to us, the Son of man who is in heaven.

John enters farther into this character of Christ: in his epistle therefore we find more of that which He is in His nature and character, than of what we shall be with Him in the glory. Peter, building on the same foundation as the others, waits however for that which shall be revealed. His pilgrimage was indeed towards heaven, to obtain a treasure which was preserved there, which shall be revealed in the last time; but it is more connected with that which had been already revealed. From his point of view, the morning star on which Paul lived appeared only on the extreme horizon. For him practical life was that of Jesus among the Jews. He could not say with Paul, "Be ye followers of me." The effect of the revelation of the heavenly glory of Christ, between His going away and His reappearance, and that of the union of all Christians to Him in heaven, was fully realised in him only who received it. Faithful through grace to this revelation, having no other object which guided his steps, or to divide his heart, he gives himself as an example. He truly followed Christ, but the form of his life was peculiar, on account of the way in which God had called him; and it is thus that Christians possessing this revelation ought to walk.

Accordingly Paul speaks of a dispensation committed to him.

It was not to turn their eyes from Christ; it is on having the eyes constantly fixed upon Him that he insists. It was this which characterised the apostle, and in this he gives himself as an example. But the character of this looking to Jesus was special. It was not a Christ known on earth who was its object, but a Christ glorified whom he had seen in heaven. To press ever forward to this end formed the character of his life; even as this same glory of Christ, as a testimony to the bringing in divine righteousness and to the assembly's position, formed the basis of his teaching. Therefore he can say, "Be followers of me." His gaze was ever fixed on the heavenly Christ, who had shone before

his eyes and still shone before his faith. The Philippians were thus to walk together, and to mark those who followed the apostle's example; because (for evidently it was a period in which the assembly as a whole had much departed from her first love and her normal condition) there were many who, while bearing the name of Christ and having once given good hope, so that the apostle speaks of them with tears, were enemies of the cross of Christ. For the cross on earth, in our life, answers to the heavenly glory on high. It is not the assembly at Philippi which is the subject here, but the condition of the outward universal assembly. Many were already calling themselves Christians, who joined to that great name a life which had the earth and earthly things for its object. The apostle did not acknowledge them. They were there; it was **not a matter of local discipline**, but a condition of Christianity, in which even all were seeking their own interest; and, spirituality being thus lowered, the Christ of glory little realised, many who had no life at all might walk among them without being detected, by those who had so little life themselves and scarcely walked better than they did. For **it does not appear that they who were minding earthly things committed any evil that required public discipline**. The general low tone of spirituality among the real Christians left the others free to walk with them; and the presence of the latter debased still more the standard of godliness of life.

But this state of things did not escape the spiritual eye of the apostle, which, fixed on the glory, discerned readily and clearly all that had not that glory for its motive; and the Spirit has given us the divine judgment, most grave and solemn, with regard to this state of things. No doubt it has grown enormously worse since then, and its elements have developed and established themselves in a manner and in proportions that are very differently characterised; but the moral principles with regard to walk remain ever the same for the assembly. The same evil is present to be avoided, and the same efficacious means for avoiding it. There is the same blessed example to follow, the same heavenly Saviour to be the glorious object of our faith, the same life to live if we desire to be Christians indeed.

That which characterised these persons who professed the name of Christ was, that their hearts were set upon earthly things. Thus the cross had not its practical power—it would have been a contradiction. Their end therefore was destruction. The true Christian was not such; his conversation was in heaven and not on the earth; his moral life was spent in heaven, his true relationships were there. From thence he expected Christ as a Saviour, that is to say, to deliver him from the earth, from this earthly system far from God here below. For salvation is always viewed in this epistle as the final result of the conflict, the result due to the almighty power of the Lord. Then, when Christ shall come to take the assembly to Himself—Christians, truly heavenly, shall be like Him in His heavenly glory, a likeness which is the object of their pursuit at all times (compare 1 John 3: 2). Christ will accomplish it in them, conforming their bodies of humiliation to His glorious body according to the power whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself. Then the apostle and all Christians will have attained the end, the resurrection from among the dead.

Such is the tenor of this chapter. Christ, seen in glory, is the spring of energy to Christian life, to win Christ, so that all else is loss; as Christ making Himself of no reputation is the spring of Christian graciousness of walk: the two parts of Christian life which we are too apt to sacrifice one to another or at least to pursue one forgetful of the other. In both Paul singularly shines. In the following chapter we have superiority to circumstances. This also is Paul's experience and state; for it will be remarked that it is the personal experience of Paul which runs all through his (humanly speaking) faultless experience—not perfection. Likeness to Christ in glory is the only standard of that. As to this third chapter, many have inquired whether the thing aimed at was a spiritual assimilation to Christ here, or a complete assimilation to Him in the glory. This is rather to forget the import of what the apostle says, namely, that the sight and the desire of the heavenly glory, the desire of possessing Christ Himself thus glorified, was that which formed the heart here below. An object here below to be attained in oneself could not be found, since Christ is on

high; it would be to separate the heart from the object which forms it to its own likeness. But although we never reach the mark here below, since it is a glorified Christ and resurrection from among the dead, yet its pursuit assimilates us more and more to Him. The object in the glory forms the life which answers to it here below. Were a light at the end of a long straight alley, I never have the light itself till I am arrived there; but I have ever increasing light in proportion as I go forward; I know it better; I am more in the light myself. Thus it is with a glorified Christ, and such is Christian life (compare 2 Cor.3).

Chapter 4

The Philippians were therefore to stand fast in the Lord. This is difficult when the general tone is lowered; painful also, for one's walk becomes much more solitary, and the hearts of others are straitened. But the Spirit has very plainly given us the example, the principle, the character, and the strength of this walk. With the eye on Christ all is easy; and communion with Him gives light and certainty; and is worth all the rest which perhaps we lose.

The apostle nevertheless spoke gently of those persons. They were not like the false judaising teachers who corrupted the sources of life, and stopped up the path of communion with God in love. They had lost this life of communion, or had never had more than the appearance of it. He wept for them.

I think that the apostle sent his letter by Epaphroditus, who probably also wrote it from the apostle's dictation; as was done with regard to all the epistles, except that to the Galatians, which, as he tells us, he wrote with his own hand. When therefore he says (ch.4:3), "true [or faithful] yokefellow," he speaks as I think, of Epaphroditus, and addresses him.

But he notices also two sisters even, who were not of one mind in resisting the enemy. In every way he desired unity of heart and mind. He entreats Epaphroditus (if indeed it be he) as the Lord's servant to help those faithful women who had laboured in concert with Paul to spread the gospel. Euodias and Syntyche were perhaps of the

number—the connection of thought makes it probable. Their activity, having gone beyond the measure of their spiritual life, betrayed them into an exercise of self-will which set them at variance. Nevertheless they were not forgotten, together with Clement and others, who were fellow-labourers with the apostle himself, whose names were in the book of life. For love for the Lord remembers all that His grace does; and this grace has a place for each of His own.

The apostle returns to the practical exhortations addressed to the faithful, with regard to their ordinary life, that they might walk according to their heavenly calling. “Rejoice in the Lord.” If he even weeps over many who call themselves Christians, he rejoices always in the Lord; in Him is that which nothing can alter. This is not an indifference to sorrow which hinders weeping, but it is a spring of joy which enlarges when there is distress, because of its immutability, and which becomes even more pure in the heart the more it becomes the only one; and it is in itself the only spring that is infinitely pure. When it is our only spring, we thereby love others. If we love them besides Him, we lose something of Him. When through exercise of heart we are weaned from all other springs, His joy remains in all its purity, and our concern for others partakes of this same purity. Nothing moreover troubles this joy, because Christ never changes. The better we know Him, the better are we able to enjoy that which is ever enlarging through knowing Him. But he exhorts Christians to rejoice: it is a testimony to the worth of Christ, it is their true portion. Four years in prison chained to a soldier had not hindered his doing it, nor being able to exhort others more at ease than he.

Now this same thing will make them moderate and meek; their passions will not be excited by other things if Christ is enjoyed. Moreover He is at hand. A little while, and all for which men strive will give place to Him whose presence bridles the will (or rather puts it aside) and fills the heart. We are not to be moved by things here below until He shall come. When He comes, we shall be fully occupied with other things.

Not only are the will and the passions to be bridled and silenced, but anxieties also. We are in relationship with God; in all things He is our refuge; and events do not disturb Him. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows everything, He knows it beforehand; events shake neither His throne, nor His heart; they always accomplish His purposes. But to us He is love; we are through grace the objects of His tender care. He listens to us and bows down His ear to hear us. **In all things therefore, instead of disquieting ourselves and weighing everything in our own hearts, we ought to present our requests to God** with prayer, with supplication, with a heart that makes itself known (for we are human beings) but with the knowledge of the heart of God (for He loves us perfectly); so that, even while making our petition to Him, we can already give thanks, because we are sure of the answer of His grace, **be it what it may**; and it is our requests that we are to present to Him. Nor is it a cold commandment to find out His will and then come: we are to go with our requests. Hence it does not say, you will have what you ask; but God's peace will keep your hearts. This is trust; and His peace, the peace of God Himself, shall keep our hearts. **It does not say that our hearts shall keep the peace of God; but, having cast our burden on Him whose peace nothing can disturb, His peace keeps our hearts.** Our trouble is before Him, and the constant peace of the God of love, who takes charge of everything and knows all beforehand, quiets our disburdened hearts, and imparts to us the peace which is in Himself and which is above all understanding (or at least keeps our hearts by it), even as He Himself is above all the circumstances that can disquiet us, and above the poor human heart that is troubled by them. Oh, what grace! that even our anxieties are a means of our being filled with this marvellous peace, if we know how to bring them to God, and true He is. May we learn indeed how to maintain this intercourse with God and its reality, in order that we may converse with Him and understand His ways with believers!

Moreover, the Christian, although walking (as we have seen) in the midst of evil and of trial, is to occupy himself with all that is good, and is able to do it when thus at

peace, to live in this atmosphere, so that it shall pervade his heart, that he shall be habitually where God is to be found. This is an all-important command. We may be occupied with evil in order to condemn it; we may be right, but this is not communion with God in that which is good. But if occupied through His grace with that which is good, with that which comes from Himself, the God of peace is with us. In trouble we shall have the peace of God; in our ordinary life, if it be of this nature, we shall have the God of peace. Paul was the practical example of this; with regard to their walk, by following him in that which they had learnt and heard from him and seen in him, they should find that God was with them.

Nevertheless, although such was his experience, he rejoiced greatly that their loving care of him had flourished again. He could indeed take refuge in God; but it was sweet to him in the Lord to have this testimony on their part. It is evident that he had been in need; but it was the occasion of more entire trust in God. We can easily gather this from his language; but, he delicately adds, he would not, by saying that their care of him had now at last flourished again, imply that they had forgotten him. The care for him was in their hearts; but they had not had the opportunity of giving expression to their love. Neither did he speak in regard of want; he had learnt—for it is practical experience and its blessed result we find here—to be content under all circumstances, and thus to depend on no one. He knew how to be abased: he knew how to abound; in every way he was instructed both to be full and to be hungry, to be in abundance and to suffer want. He could do all things through Him who strengthened him. Sweet and precious experience! not only because it gives ability to meet all circumstances, which is of great price, but because the Lord is known, the constant, faithful, mighty friend of the heart. It is not ‘I can do all things,’ but “I can do all through him who strengtheneth me.” It is a strength which continually flows from a relationship with Christ, a connection with Him maintained in the heart. Neither is it only ‘One can do all things.’ This is true; but Paul had learnt it practically. He knew what he could be assured of and reckon on—what ground he stood

on. Christ had always been faithful to him, had brought him through so many difficulties and through so many seasons of prosperity, that he had learnt to trust in Him, and not in circumstances. And Christ was the same ever. Still the Philippians had done well, and it was not forgotten. From the first God had bestowed this grace upon them, and they had supplied the apostle's need, even when he was not with them. He remembered it with affection, not that he desired a gift, but fruit to their own account. "But," he says, "I have all," his heart turning back to the simple expression of his love. He was in abundance, having received by Epaphroditus that which they had sent him, an acceptable sacrifice of sweet odour, well-pleasing to God.

His heart rested in God; his assurance with regard to the Philippians expresses it. My God, he says, shall richly supply all your need. He does not express a wish that God may do so. He had learnt what his God was by his own experience. My God, he says, He whom I have learnt to know in all the circumstances through which I have passed, shall fill you with all good things. And here he returns to His character as he had known Him. God would do it according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. There he had learnt to know Him at the beginning; and such he had known Him all along his varied path, so full of trials here and of joys from above. Accordingly he thus concludes: "Now unto our God and Father"—for such He was to the Philippians also—"be glory for ever and ever." He applies his own experience of that which God was to him, and his experience of the faithfulness of Christ, to the Philippians. This satisfied his love, and gave him rest with regard to them. It is a comfort when we think of the assembly of God.

He sends the greeting of the brethren who were with him, and of the saints in general, especially those of Caesar's household; for even there God had found some who through grace had listened to His voice of love.

He ends with the salutation which was a token in all his epistles that they were from himself.

The present state of the assembly, of the children of God, dispersed anew, and often as sheep without a shepherd, is a very different condition of ruin from that in which the apostle wrote; but this only adds more value to the experience of the apostle which God has been pleased to give us; the experience of a heart which trusted in God alone, and which applies this experience to the condition of those who are deprived of the natural resources that belonged to the organised body, to the body of Christ as God had formed it on earth. As a whole, the epistle shews proper Christian experience, that is, **superiority, as walking in the Spirit, to everything through which we have to pass.** It is remarkable to see that sin is not mentioned in it, nor flesh, save to say he had no confidence in it.

He had at this time a thorn in the flesh himself, but the proper experience of the Christian is walking in the Spirit above and out of the reach of all that may bring the flesh into activity.

The reader will remark that chapter 3 sets the glory before the Christian and gives the energy of Christian life; chapter 2, the self-emptying and abasement of Christ, and founds thereon the graciousness of the Christian life, and thoughtfulness of others: while the last chapter gives a blessed superiority to all circumstances.

Brief Notes on The Epistle to the Philippians

Notes Présentant des Aperçus sur Quelques Épitres du
Nouveau Testament [Vigan, 1856]
Collected Writings, vol.27, p.171

The Epistle to the Philippians presents the development of two distinct subjects. On the one hand it shews us the ties of affection which exist between the Lord's servant and those to whom he had been blessed; and, on the other, Christian experience. It is perhaps the only epistle which treats of the experience of the Christian. We thus see the completeness of God's word; in it every subject has its own proper place.

Chapter 1

Verses 5-7. "I have you in my heart" ought rather to be translated, "Ye have me in your hearts." The meaning of this verse is this: "It is righteous for me to think thus as to you (that is, that I should have confidence in the completion of the good work begun in you), since ye have me in your hearts."

"Ye are all partakers of my grace." This signifies that they were all participators in the grace that rested on him. Everyone has not a gift of ministry; but by grace, whoever loves the Lord participates in the gospel.

Verse 10. "That ye may approve things that are excellent"—that is, that differ and so are the best. There may be a regular walk, which does not perhaps shew enough of that delicacy and regard which the love of Christ teaches, and by which God is glorified.

Verse 11. "The fruit of righteousness"—that is, such fruit as would have been found in the life of Christ Himself.

Verse 12. "The things which happened unto me ... for the furtherance of the gospel." All the difficulties resulting from Paul's absence only turned out for good; Christ was more abundantly preached; the Philippians were taking courage, the gospel was carried before Caesar, etc. And Paul was rejoicing when he saw that the efforts of Satan were contributing to the progress of the gospel.

Verse 16. Who are the preachers pointed out in this verse? All that is said is, that they preached Christ in a bad spirit.

They might be persons who had too little spiritually to dare to act when Paul was present, but availed themselves of his absence to come forward.

Verse 19. "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation"—that is, shall contribute to my final victory over the enemy.

Does the apostle refer in these words to the hope he had of being delivered from his bonds? I do not think that he does. The word "salvation" is used for our complete deliverance, and not merely for passing deliverances which we may experience by the way. Salvation is an absolute thing; it is the final result of the race. It is well to maintain the sense of this word; because we have here the key to the whole epistle. If there be not a salvation at the end of the race, of what avail is the priesthood of Christ?

Verses 20-21 are the same subject. Whatever may be Caesar's decision about me—whatever may await me, be it life or death, it works salvation to me, says the apostle; my race is accomplished through such circumstances. If life be left me, I will labour for the church; if death be my portion, I will die for Christ, for His name; as to this, Christ will decide. As regarded himself, Paul wished to die. Having death before him, he had, so to speak, attained his Gethsemane; and thus he had confidence that the Christ who had been glorified in his life would be also glorified in his death.

Verse 21. "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Christ was all in Paul's life. If Paul lived, it was by Christ and for Christ. Therefore to die would be better; he would be most entirely with Him.

Verses 25-26. Paul decides his own case; he decides it in the sense of the good and profit of the church. Neither Caesar nor his court would decide it, but Christ; and He would do it in the interest of the church. Paul in this shews the most elevated faith.

Verse 27. "The faith of the gospel." In this expression Paul personifies the gospel. He sees the gospel carrying on warfare in the world, and the saints carrying on warfare for Christ, associating it with that Person. The epistles of

Paul present several instances in which the gospel is thus personified.

Verse 28. "Of salvation." Here again salvation is looked at as the result of the race.

Verses 29-30. Paul on one side, the Philippians on the other, were in the warfare, and they had—all of them—salvation before them.

Chapter 2

We see further on that the Philippians had sent help to Paul. While expressing his satisfaction, he insinuated, but with caution, that they might have done so sooner; ch.4:10. Here, with the same delicacy, he says, "If it be true that there are any bowels and mercies, if it be true (which he did not doubt) that ye have my joy at heart, fulfil ye that joy, by thinking the same thing," etc.

Verses 3-4. Above all else, the heart of Paul desired that unity might be maintained among the saints; and, as a means of maintaining happy harmony, he recommends humility, which teaches the Christian to esteem himself to be least of all.

Verse 5. Paul, doubtless, will find an echo in the hearts of the Philippians, but he wished to give them higher motives than those which related only to himself. To this end he places before their eyes the humiliation of the Lord Jesus, who, being God, yet became man and servant; and was obedient even unto the death of the cross.

Verses 5-11. In these verses, although the thing is not said in express terms, there is, it seems to me, a **contrast between Christ and Adam**. Adam—man—in wishing to exalt himself to be like God, was disobedient unto death; Christ—who was God—emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman, and, even when He was in fashion as a man, became obedient and obeyed even unto death. There are two degrees in Christ's humiliation. He first strips Himself of His own glory, and becomes a man: then, being man, He goes down even unto the death of the cross.

Verse 10. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." The name of Jesus is a personal name—*Jah-*

*Oshua*⁸ (Jehoshua)—Jehovah—Saviour. It is the name of His Person. The name “Christ” expresses a title—that of a man who is appointed. Independently of any title, Jesus possesses His own proper personal claim to supremacy over all things. He is God. The deity of Jesus occupies in the New Testament a much greater place than is generally observed.

But as man Jesus has also a glory which He receives, the glory which results from His humiliation— “God also hath highly exalted him.”

All things are subjected under the lordship of Christ—things heavenly, and earthly, and infernal (which are under the earth). This third class has no part in the reconciliation of “all things,” as they are mentioned in Colossians 11:20.

Verses 12-13. The emphasis in verse 12 is on these words: “not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence.” If, Paul being absent and retained in prison, the Philippians were deprived of him, God would suffice; He is never absent.

“Work out your own salvation”—not your acceptance, but your salvation. Apply yourselves to the things which become persons who look for salvation. Be watchful, lest anything should lead you out of your way, for your path is strewn with difficulties. Here, as in the preceding instances, salvation is looked at as the end of the race. We never find in the Epistle to the Philippians that the Christian is viewed as possessing that which is a matter of faith—a very remarkable thing; unless we discern it in the believer on his way and striving for salvation, it is unintelligible.

Paul, when he was called, saw the Lord in glory. He knew that he would one day be in that glory with his Master, and like Him. Hence, until he reached this, he felt that nothing could entirely satisfy him, and, moved by heavenly affections, he pressed on towards that blessed moment.

⁸ See Numbers 13:16.

The Christian, through grace, is placed on the same road. At the starting-point he is reconciled with God; and that reconciliation has become in its turn the starting-point for his other blessings. Now the Lord, in calling that Christian with a heavenly calling, has put into his heart spiritual affections; grace has formed a relationship between the Christian who is on earth and Jesus who is on high. But if this blessed relationship is not sustained, the heavenly affections in the heart of a child of God become dormant and cold affections. The assurance of salvation might remain perhaps, but isolated; all spiritual affections are lost.

“With fear and trembling.” We meet with difficulties on the road, though indeed we are sure to arrive. Although the race be not the title of our acceptance, still that race is none the less a serious and important thing. What a privilege and what an honour to be God’s instruments in the conflict engaged with Satan! But what a responsibility also! One cannot stand firm in this conflict if one is careless, if we act in a bad spirit, if we yield to the flesh, etc.

Verse 14. Translate, “Without murmurings and reasonings.”

Verse 15. Translate, “Ye appear as lights.”

Verse 17. It is, “If also I am poured out as a libation.”

Verses 25-30. What a contrast between the feelings of Paul, and those which he knew to exist in the Philippians respecting Epaphroditus, with the mass of ice to which Christianity has been reduced in these days! How quick and coldly one says of a departed Christian, “He is happy.” Of course Epaphroditus, if he had died of his sickness, would have departed happy to be in the bosom of Jesus. And Paul would assuredly have been resigned in seeing the departure of his brother; but his recovery filled Paul’s heart with joy.

Chapter 3

This chapter forms a kind of parenthesis, at least after the first verses. Paul interrupts the subject of brotherly intercourse to give us the beautiful developments of the

heavenly calling, which we notice in this portion of the epistle. He then draws from those developments some teaching for the Philippians; and by this he comes to chapter 4, the exhortations and spiritual communications of which form a sequel to those of chapter 2.

Verse 2. "Beware of dogs." That is, of those who do evil shamelessly.

Verse 3. We see in this verse three features which characterise the service of the Christian. One worships God in [by the] Spirit, not in carnal ceremonies; one boasts in Christ Jesus, and not in man; one has the Lord, and therefore has no confidence in the flesh.

Verses 4-6. The flesh finds means, even in the things instituted by God, to do many things in order to exalt oneself.

Verse 7. Paul's doctrine presents the abiding fact, that the last Adam has all superiority over the first, and the Spirit over the flesh. One cannot retain anything of the first Adam without detriment to the last.

Verses 7-8. Always that which is before—"to gain Christ"—to reach unto Him. Had Paul reached Christ? Not absolutely. As to his soul, he had; he is with the Lord; but not as to the body. The resurrection has not yet taken place.

Verse 8. "I have suffered the loss of all things." What things? Those which the flesh values—things like those which the apostle tells us he had given up.

Verse 9. "Found in him." When? Rather at the end of the race.

Having "the righteousness which is of God." To be in Christ in order to have that righteousness, and not to possess righteousness as a means to get Christ. Such is the order in which things present themselves to Paul when it is a question of the heavenly calling and of the race. Mark well, he wished not for the righteousness of the law, not because he cannot attain to it (which, however, would be true); but because in Christ he had something better than that. The righteousness of the law, had he been able to

attain to it, would hinder his possessing Christ—so he will not have it.

Verses 9-10, present **two things**—to be in Him, and to know Him.

Verse 10. Paul points out in this verse the means by which he would arrive at the resurrection from among the dead and attain Christ. When he had laid hold of the power of the resurrection, he can pass through death and not before.

Verse 12. A fact which precedes all others is that before taking a single step in this path Paul had been taken possession of by Christ. He had been taken possession of by Christ—for Christ Jesus.

Verse 14. “Toward the mark”—always this aim—the glorious Christ towards whom the race tends.

Verses 15-16. The degree to which one has attained in the knowledge of Christ is not the rule of unity; the saints must be able to walk together, whatever difference there may be between them as to the extent of that knowledge.

Let not the strong in receiving the weak require from him a state to which he has himself attained: and let not the weak lay down the limit unto which he has arrived, as the rule for others. Let us walk together: and as to that which goes beyond the measure to which we have attained, God will teach us.

Could it be that a Christian might not finish his course? In some respects it might so happen: or, at least, the course would not be finished in the way that was intended. Nevertheless such a case was foreseen in God’s counsels. Ananias and Sapphira furnish perhaps a similar instance. There are some who make shipwreck, who fail as to faith, as to the doctrine that faith receives, without its being said on that account that they had abandoned their faith. Having in view this danger, Paul recommended Timothy to maintain faith and a good conscience; to hold fast the truth of God as well as that uprightness of heart in which the soul judges itself, and abides in the presence of God, ever open under His eye. If a good conscience fails, the enemy finds an entrance, and faith is in danger.

There is a crown of righteousness promised to those who love the Lord's appearing. Why is it called a crown of righteousness? Because it will be given to those to whom it is righteous to give it, "which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me," 2 Tim. 4: 8. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have shewed towards his name," Heb. 6: 10.

Verses 18-19. "Who are the many whose walk made Paul weep?" They are rather professors than real Christians; those perhaps in the beginning of the chapter. I should feel a difficulty in saying in an absolute way as applying it to Christians— "whose end is destruction."

These two verses have this importance, that they may indicate the period when Christendom will have gone beyond Christianity. We see in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, that the saints are warned of this danger; ch.10. And in this epistle we find that the very presence of evil is already stated.

Verses 20-21. Here again salvation is presented as a future thing. "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus." He is coming in glory to receive us into that glory. This is the goal towards which we run.

Chapter 4

Paul now returns to exhortations.

Verse 3. "Thee also, true yokefellow." It was, doubtless, the one who carried the letter, Epaphroditus. Literally, "Help them [those] who have contended along with me." It is a recommendation to help the women who had contended in the gospel. Euodia and Syntyche were of that number.

Verse 7. "The peace of God ... shall keep your hearts." The peace of God is that peace in which God Himself is. We read, not that our hearts keep that peace, but that it keeps our hearts.

Verses 8-9. In walking according to the exhortations of the apostle, the Philippians would find God with them—the God of peace.

Verse 10. "Your care of me hath flourished again." It is a slight reproach, which Paul softens by adding, "wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity."

Verses 12-13. It is often in a very abstract way that one says, "I can do all things." While Paul says, "I can do all things," he adds, "I have learned," "I am instructed."

Verse 19. "My God"—that faithful God, whose faithfulness Paul had felt so often. It is with this feeling of gratitude that Paul says, "My God."

Remarks

In the race which the Lord has opened to faith, the Christian finds himself individually engaged, and his responsibility finds its place. The Christian, it is true, is no longer before God in the condition of a man with his sins. But, in virtue of the new position which grace has made unto him, he has entered upon a new and different responsibility. He has practically to answer all the privileges which are vouchsafed to him. He has to walk in the Spirit, to press towards the goal, to shew himself worthy of his calling, and as a child of God to walk in love, etc.

The day of Christ will shew in what manner that child of God has run. It is while he runs the race that he has to watch, lest anything should stop him, or turn him aside from his road. He meets with hindrances, and may perhaps find them even in the unfaithful state of God's people. It is for him to watch; the delay of others could not justify His own; the race is an individual thing.

Nevertheless, in the Book of Numbers, which presents the going through the wilderness, do we not see a people on their march? This is true, but we must observe, that in the heavenly calling, of which we are partakers, God has formed a relationship with each of His saints; and that relationship is infinitely more developed than it could have been with the Israelites in the wilderness.

The reward at the end of the race is never the motive given to make us enter on the course; it is an encouragement to persevere when one is already engaged therein. Jesus Himself knew these encouragements—

“Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame,” Heb. 12.

On The Philippians

Bible Treasury, vol.7 p.297 [1869]

Collected Writings, vol.17, p.373

The Epistle to the Philippians looks at the Christian as on a journey with an object before him, and that object the actual winning of Christ, the laying hold of that for which he had been laid hold of by Christ; and therefore salvation is looked at as a thing to be attained—the Christian reaching in result what he had laid hold on before by faith.

Overview

Chapter 1 is an introduction. Chapters 2, 3, 4, present to us three aspects of Christian life. In chapter 2 we see the gracious mind that was in Christ illustrated in the servants and the saints also: in chapter 3 the energy of the apostle in running after the prize: and in chapter 4 his complete superiority over all circumstances. In all of it the experience which is the result of the power of the Spirit of God acting in the Christian—no idea of failure.

We do not get sin mentioned throughout the epistle. There were a few things that needed setting right: for instance, the two women in chapter 4 needed exhorting to be of the same mind, they were in a little discord; but what is described is the effect of the Spirit's power. Sin is not mentioned. Nevertheless I suppose the Thessalonian saints were in the freshest condition of any we read of, as we find the first epistle was written to them only about two months or the like after their conversion, so that their first love was in activity.

Chapter 1

There was real devotedness in the gospel amongst the Philippians, which the apostle does not omit noticing, nor forget their kindness now renewed. (See ch.4:15-16, and 1:3, 7, where read “ye have me,” not “I have you.”) And this gave him confidence as to them, as well as regarded himself, that He who had begun the good work would accomplish it unto the day of Christ. There the work is

still viewed as one reaching on to its great result. As to himself this confidence was most blessed, and accompanied by, and in some respects the fruit of, a conscience kept in the full light of God's countenance by the Spirit of God. "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body." Self is always shut out when grace is really known and enjoyed.

Then a word as to verse 6. It is a great comfort to know that what God has begun He is going to complete; and it was Paul's confidence towards the Philippian saints, because they had him in their heart, as verse 7 tells us. This made it but just for him to judge the divine life was working in them; but then there was this deep comfort for the love that was in his heart, and freshly awakened in it; but then that was God's work and He would complete it. This verse should be read according to the margin, and not as translated in the text. The apostle was in their hearts, and it was a proof to him of divine life.

Paul was not occupied at all with his outward life, but with the inward life. He had Christ always before him, and when it was a question of which he would choose, whether to go to be with Christ or to remain on the earth, he is in a strait; if he dies, it is to be with Christ; and if he remains, it is worth while, for here he can labour for the church's good: and through the blessedness of both paths he knows not which to choose, so that self is done away as a motive. Blessed state! And then the blessing of the saints is his motive under Christ, and so he remains as more needful for them. You see it is Christ that decides thus the result, and he decides his own case; for if it be better for the church he should remain, Christ was over all—he would remain. It is not the reckless Nero nor any one else; it is a question with Paul what most pleases Christ. He never thinks of the circumstances which he was in: nigh unto death, he has got his eye only on Christ. To die would be gain to any Christian, and so would to live be Christ. But there is a difference between an abstract truth and the practical realisation of that truth; like Paul, in the Acts, when before Agrippa, he could say, "I would that ... all that hear me this day were ... altogether such I am, except these bonds." We know any Christian could say

that, for it would be better that all were saved; but it is a very different thing to be in Paul's condition, and say it with his spirit.

In **verse 10**, where the expression "the **day of Christ**" occurs, it means **the day when He comes to judge**; it is always so when it refers to our responsibility; it never means the rapture of the church when it speaks of saints' responsibility, as in 1 Timothy 6: 13, 14, "I give thee charge ... that thou keep this commandment without spot until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." We could **not connect the rapture with responsibility**. We are all alike caught up together, and alike conformed to the image of God's Son. It is the result of grace for every saint; but the rewards will be according to the fruits and works, as in John 15, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." And the Christian is not merely called on to avoid open evil, but to have spiritual discernment, so as to understand what is excellent—more conformed to the divine mind. This makes verse 10 of chapter 1 a very important one. Verse 12 brings out the power over circumstances. It did not matter what position Paul was in he always reckoned on the power of Christ.

It is beautiful to see how Christ is the sole object before the apostle. He is glad though it be in contention that Christ is preached, so that He was preached. "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." A person who is converted may walk in a manner that does not dishonour Christ, but it is a different thing to have Christ as the motive for everything; and if the latter condition be that of the soul, it always raises the mind above sorrow. For the thought that Christ was preached of contention might cause sorrow in the apostle's heart, but he is above that because Christ is preached.

Where there is not real spiritual energy, the thought of prison crows people; and when Satan managed to get the preacher of Christ there, he thought he had gained his end; but they got courage as to his bonds. Paul was so identified with the gospel that, when the gospel succeeded, it was to him success; and in that day the gospel was not made to suit people as in this day. Paul was nothing terrified by his adversaries; as Peter also says,

“As long as ye do well and are not afraid with any amazement.” Satan tried to alarm people and make them shy. When the apostle speaks of the gospel or the vocation, as in chapter 1:27, he means the whole thing (Christianity). The word “conversation” in this verse refers to one’s walk.

“To them an evident token of perdition.” For when Satan’s power is fully exercised, and it is seen that it has no power over Paul or any servant of Christ, it is manifested that it has met One which is superior to itself, that is, a divine One, and that they who oppose are its adversaries; and thus it is a token of perdition to them, and for the same reason, of salvation to those helped by divine power; for still salvation in the epistle is the result in victory. Then in verse 29 we see that “it is given not only to believe, but to suffer for his sake.” And now we come to the end of chapter 1, which is a kind of introduction to the epistle.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 is full of instruction. It is very touching the way the apostle speaks in this chapter. They had sent him help from a long way, and sought to minister to his wants; but he says, if they want to make him truly happy—to fulfil his joy, they must be walking like Christ; they must be of one mind. How gently and courteous a way of dealing with them is this, in the presence of their love and kindness to him! He could not harshly reprove, but love would not have the evil uncorrected, and deals thus delicately as to it. “If there be any consolation in Christ,” etc., “fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded.” He sets Christ before them as an example; and he could say too, “Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ,” not “as far as I follow Christ”; but I am following Christ, and I want you to copy my example and follow Him too.

Then in verses 3-4, of this chapter, each is exhorted to “esteem each other better than himself.” Now there will be no difficulty in this if we are really walking before God; we shall be occupied with each other’s good, and the one will esteem the other better than himself, because when the soul is really before the Lord, it will see its own

shortcomings and imperfections, and will be in self-judgment; and according to the love and spirit of Christ see all the good that is from Him in a brother and one dear to him, and will therefore look upon his fellow-Christian as better than himself, and so all would be in beautiful harmony; and we should be looking after each other's interests too. As I have often remarked, love likes to be a servant, and selfishness likes to be served.

Then, in verses 5-8, we get the humiliation of Jesus even unto death, though not in the sense of atonement, nor of patience of suffering put upon Him, but in voluntary humiliation, the way and pattern of lowliness for our souls, producing the graciousness which becomes the Christian and adorns his life. This is in contrast with the first Adam. He sought to be exalted when in the form of man, and that by robbery; he ate that which was forbidden, to become equal with God; but the last Adam, when in the form of God (though He thought it not robbery to be equal with God as to His dignity) left all and came down here to be a man, and in the form of a servant; and then as a man humbled Himself, and became obedient to death.

God looks for us to walk in the character of the last Adam, and not of the first—that of humbling and not of exalting. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ." Thus a self-humbling Christ, the mind that was in Him, is the source of Christian graciousness and consideration for others; and this will be found exemplified in Paul's way of dealing with them, and all that follows as to Timothy and Epaphroditus, where Christian love is so sweetly insisted on as well as shewn.

In chapter 3, on the other hand, Paul sees Christ up in the glory, and is running after Him, giving its energy to the Christian life, as in chapter 2 he sees Him on the earth as the brightest example of lowliness; and as the result of that lowliness God gives Him a name which is above every name: this is given to Him as Son of man. The mind that was in Christ was the mind of coming down, and that is what the apostle wants to see in us.

There is no place where Christ is so glorified as at the cross, although it was in shame. In the glory we shall be with Him and like Him, though there would have been no glory for us without the cross. But who could have been with Him on the cross? There He was wholly alone with God.

The word “Lord” is used in two distinct senses in the New Testament; in some places it means “Jehovah,” and in others made “Lord and Christ,” as Lord over all; as in Acts 10. He is “Lord of all.” This is the sense in which it is used in chapter 2:11. Of course, we know that He is Jehovah, as in John 12, where the quotation is made from Isaiah 6, “I saw the Lord,” etc. There you get Him as Jehovah, and often in the Old Testament. In truth the second Person of the Godhead is He in whom Jehovah is revealed there. We may see how the three persons are closely connected all through the acts of Christ, even in the miracles—Christ as Son wrought the miracles; but it is said, “The Father that is in me, he doeth the works.” And also, “If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God.” So we see the three inseparably united, as in the resurrection of Christ also. We find in chapter 2 of John’s gospel Christ speaking of raising Himself. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it again.” Then we read in another scripture, “Whom God raised from the dead”; and lastly, He was “quickened by the Spirit.” All God’s glory was engaged in the resurrection of Christ.

In the epistles of John you cannot separate Christ and God. The apostle speaks of Christ both as God and Christ in the very same sentence, as in 1 John 2:20; ch.3:1: “Abide in him; that when he shall appear” ... at his coming that is Christ, born of Him. In verse 29 the same person is God, as is manifest from chapter 3:1; “him not” is Christ; “he shall appear,” now it is Christ again, and so all verses 2-3. Thus he calls Him God and Christ in the same verse, and there are other similar instances in this epistle. We see this divine union in the words of Christ Himself, for He says in John’s Gospel, “The Son of man, who is in heaven,” although He was then actually on earth at the time. The word “Jehovah” refers to the three

persons of the Godhead, which men rightly call the Trinity.

The New Testament is the opening out of the unity of the Godhead in the Trinity of the Persons. Christ was here God as well as Man, and His Person cannot be divided. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there *am I* in the midst of them." Of course it is spiritually that this is true; but nevertheless it is our privilege to rejoice in His presence as that very Jesus who shed His blood for us. It is not the Spirit's presence, though He must be present that we may enjoy Christ's. But the Spirit has not died, suffered, and walked amongst us as Jesus did. The Holy Ghost is present, and reveals the Father's love and Christ Himself to us, and thus the Holy Ghost is the power in us, and the Father and the Son are they with whom we have fellowship; and this is the reason why we do not pray to the Holy Ghost. His place, in the ways of grace, is to be in us; the Father and the Son are the objects, by His revelation of them, before the soul.

I would just notice the way in which people have blundered with reference to the twelfth verse, which they think conveys the idea of a person working himself to obtain eternal life in contrast with God's working, insisting on the words "work out your own." It is altogether mistaken. The apostle had been with them and had cared for them, had worked for them, kept at bay the power of the enemy, meeting the difficulties of the warfare. But this was not to continue; he now being in prison and having left them, they had to work out their salvation. That is, they would now have to fight their own battles, and have their own conflicts, which Paul felt was a very solemn thing; they were to do it "with fear and trembling." And I am sure we shall all feel it a solemn thing, if we have a right apprehension of it, when we think of the great powers that are against us—the world, the flesh, and Satan; and are having to make good God's cause and maintain by grace our own standing (learning too the conflict of flesh and Spirit).

It is indeed a solemn thing to know that we are the vessels of a conflict between God and Satan. But it is no contrast between our working and God's; but our working and

Paul's, who could no longer be in the conflict for them, but who adds, "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do"—they had not lost Him. When Scripture speaks of my place in Christ as the result of accomplished redemption, there are no "ifs" or "buts" or warnings about it. These come when it looks at me as a Christian in the world under responsibility. And the Lord brings us through our trials and difficulties; but it is only to shew us what is in ourselves and also to display what is in God, to abound over it all. So we see the passage of the children of Israel from the Red Sea to Canaan taught them many difficulties, but it also taught them the faithfulness of God: and when the journey through the wilderness was really finished, and they were come to the borders of the land, and were called to go up the mountain and enter into the land, their unbelief and distrust broke out, and they wanted Moses to send spies to see the land before they attempted to enter. Well, God permitted it, but what was the result? The very appearance of the place frightened them; the high walls, etc., staggered them; and they were afraid to go up. So Moses says, Well, there is nothing but the wilderness for you; and so they turned back. But, though chastening, God turned back with them.

Surely it only brings out God's purpose of grace, as Moses told them in Deuteronomy 8, it was to "humble thee and prove thee, to know what was in thine heart," and also to shew them what was in His. And He was above all their failure and shortcomings, taking care of them even to the nap of their coats. His ultimate result was blessing. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." I am sure it is a real conflict; but then we have the joy that God works in us. A man who has been a very proud one, when he is really broken-hearted before God, makes a humbler Christian than a man who never shewed signs of pride at all; for he finds grace with God to be subdued, and manifests that grace with others; when he sees it rising, he knows what is rising, and therefore is ready with a check upon it.

Verses 14-15. In this latter verse each element of the exhortation is exactly what Christ was upon earth; blameless, harmless, Son of God, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, the light of the

world, holding forth the word of life. It forms a lovely picture of Christ's path, and just what we are exhorted to be. So we hear Paul saying of himself what Christ could have said, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." This is a very wonderful thing to say. Real fellowship with Christ's sufferings was this, and we find Paul looking on to the day, in verse 16, with joy at the time when the result of all would be manifested. It is then when rewards are distributed; it is not a question of salvation at all. Reward is connected with labour, not with salvation.

Verses 19-30. How sweet it is to see the gracious thoughtfulness of the apostle towards these saints. "I trust in the Lord to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state." You see he could say he would send Timotheus shortly; not so with Epaphroditus—he must send him at once, for they had heard he had been sick and were sorrowful, and so the apostle is careful to end that sorrow by sending Epaphroditus unto them (v. 28). In the last verse he seems to intimate that they had been a little careless about him—"Your lack of service," and also in chapter 4: 10; and he gives a very gentle rebuke and corrects what he says by expressing his assurance of their loving care; not that he spoke in respect of want, for he knew how to be abased and how to abound. If it was a gift of love, he would gladly receive their gifts; but still the good of the gospel is in his mind. If as the Corinthians they attached great importance to their money, he would have nothing to do with it, he wanted not their money but their hearts.

Chapter 3

In chapter 3 we see Paul, in his energetic spirit, running after a prize. Important warnings in verse 2, he will not allow these Judaisers to be the "circumcision" here, but "concision," which was a word of contempt: "we are the circumcision."

Paul counts all dross and dung that he might win Christ. O what single-eyed energy for Christ! You see if Christ is so precious to me that everything else is dung and dross, it

will be no difficulty for me to throw it aside; that is the secret—the power of an absorbing object to deliver me from all else. It is to the extent my heart values an object that it is a temptation to me. Suppose I have a very beautiful cloak on, and I am running a race, if my heart is really occupied with the prize, I shall not mind the beauty of the cloak; I shall only know it as a weight, and shall cast it off me, as we find in Hebrews, “laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset.” There they are only looked at as weights that have simply to be thrown aside. Note, this was not a mere passing effect with Paul when the glory of Christ first gleamed in upon him; but at the end of his course he could say, “And I do count them but dung that I may win Christ.” He kept up to it all through his course; and we shall do the same just to the extent our minds are on the prize; and first of all the prize to him was winning Christ Himself.

Verses 11-12. Paul views his own glory as connected with it at the end of his journey. The resurrection is an object of attainment. He looked at all suffering too in the power of resurrection, which always makes suffering easy. He says, It does not matter what I pass through, whether death or anything else, so that I may get Him. “If by any means”—no matter what (v.11), if it costs me my life— “I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead”; not “of the dead,” but from among the dead. “This was the difficulty in Mark 9 to. They reasoned what the resurrection from the dead meant. A general resurrection of the dead was common enough: every Pharisee or orthodox Jew held it; but one from the dead was a new thing altogether, and this is the character of the saint’s resurrection. God delighted in Christ, and therefore raised Him from among the dead. He also delights in us and is going to raise us from among the dead. We run a race, but not an uncertain one.

The perfect ones spoken of in verse 15 are those who have laid hold on the truth of being risen and glorified with Christ on high; not only knowing that my sins are just forgiven, but apprehending the higher truth of resurrection in Christ. And it is as these we are called to walk. This is the same perfection as is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 2,

“We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.” The only perfection the apostle has before him is to be like Christ in glory and not like the first Adam.

A person may more easily know his sins forgiven, but it is a further truth to know that he is himself “dead to sin.” He finds this conflicts with his experience—that does not affect his experience. Suppose I tell you a debt of a thousand pounds which you owed was paid by some one, it would not be a question of experience, but of simply believing my statement. just so with God. He tells us our sins are forgiven, and it is a question whether we believe Him. But when He tells us we are dead to sin, we look inside and say, Ah, sin is still at work: how is that? A person must be taught of God to know really the truth that he is dead to sin.

Chapter 4

The rest of the epistle is still simply experience—sitting loose to the world, caring about nothing but Christ, superiority over all circumstances; and the apostle concludes, “My God shall supply all your need”—*my* God, the One whom I have been learning, I count upon for all your wants.

Philippians—An Outline

Truth for the Last Days #3. Sligo, July 1871
Miscellaneous Writings, vol.4 p.212

Chapter 1

In the Epistle to the Philippians there is not much doctrine, but Christian experience as it ought to be—in the power of the Spirit of God—as it was in fact in Paul's case. You never get the working of the flesh or the word sin in the Epistle, but the operation of the Spirit of God leading the saint to walk in the Spirit. All through it is the working of the Spirit in varied aspects of Christian life.

Chapter 1 The general character of Christian life in the presence of life and death

Chapter 2 The likeness to Christ in graciousness of walk.

Chapter 3. The energy of Christian life that carries Paul through circumstances.

Chapter 4. The entire superiority to all circumstances Paul had a thorn in the flesh at the very time; so it was not absence of flesh, but walking in the power of the Spirit.

Verse 1. Office was local, not so gift. Order is gone and it is a mercy it is, in one sense, because else I should have to recognize the clergy and all the corruption. Man always spoils at the outset what God sets up. All will be set up in Christ, the second Man, that failed in the first, in all its various forms and shapes.

Verse 6 Personal dependence on the Lord to carry on the work.

Verses 9-11. Paul was not content merely that the Philippians should do no wrong, but that they should have spiritual discernment as to the *best* thing to do, namely to glorify Christ. The fruit of righteousness is the expression of the life of Christ, not merely the natural consequences of the life but its manifestation. The day of Christ brings Christ more personally before us than the day of the Lord.

Verse 18. You find things that are done in the spirit of evil that you can rejoice in, though you cannot go with them (*cf* Luke 9:49).

Verse 19. Nothing is looked at as accomplished in the Epistle. All our blessings in Christ are looked at as at the end. Paul looks at the Christian as running the race, therefore it is not doctrine. I have eternal life, but it is looked at as the end. Satan seems to have got the victory as to the Apostle, but he says "this shall turn to my salvation." I have got righteousness but it is not displayed except in glory. The consequence of Israel being delivered from Egypt was that it brought them into the wilderness. There I am dependent but have the comfort of Gods faithfulness. I am held in infallible safety, but have to be held—kept by the power of God, but need to be kept, and would not come to a good end if I were not. I need grace every minute, though not more safe when in heaven. For the race you find the "ifs." He will perfect, but He needs to perfect and I to be perfected—a constant action on the part of God. So Israel in Deuteronomy 8. God was not uncertain what He was about, but putting them into and through all the exercises, and when they came to the end they found that God had been thinking of everything for them. They had not been thinking of it by the way, but it was all "to do thee good at thy latter end."

Verse 28. Satan in the darkness and opposition to the truth. We are apt to be cowed by the power of evil. Where there is boldness it is the ruin of the adversaries; they have got in collision with the power of God, not of poor man. It is a question between God and Satan. The instruments of Satan are cowed (cf Josh.2:9-24). The man four years in prison, chained to a soldier, encourages those who were not in prison. It is not when the trial is there that we suffer the most, where there is faith; but when we are expecting and looking at it: when in it we look out of it at God. If we do not lean on God the enemy can have his own way and run after us.

Chapter 2

Chapters 2 and 3, present the two sides of Christian life. The graciousness that makes me thoughtful of others, and the energy that enables me to run on through the world without caring for it. In one Christ is presented as coming down and you are to come down like Him, in the other Christ is gone up and I am to go up after Him.

Verse 3. This is not possible if I took at the bare hard fact, but quite possible in Christ. I see the flesh in myself and Christ in my brother. Compare 1 Corinthians 1: 4-9 with the rest of the Epistle: He begins to blame them for everything, but he sees all the good first, and rests in the good, and then blames them, without vexation, in love. It is a great test of nearness to Christ. It needs to live with Him and learn oneself there. The flesh mixes itself up with so much of our judgment of evil, and we get vexed with it. Self jostles against another man's self. Now if I think of what Christ thinks of that person all this is put down. Near Christ there is lowliness of heart and we see our own wretchedness and good-for-nothingness. "Things of others" are things which God has given.

Verses 6-9. The last Adam is presented in contrast with the first. Adam set up by robbery to be as God. He who was in the form of God humbled Himself down to death below the creature. Adam exalted himself and is abased. Christ humbled Himself and is exalted. Satan's temptation was, "If thou be the Son of God *command*." "No," he says, "I will not keep out of the place of service, I came to *obey*." He left the glory as to state not as to nature.

Verse 12, 13. "Your own salvation" is often quoted as if it was in contrast with God's, but it is in contrast with Paul. Paul worked for you, God works in you. The path of obedience is that in which salvation is wrought. God works in them the willing and the doing.

Verses 14-16. The effect is the life of Christ completely expressed. Every member of the sentence is just what Christ was in the world.

Verse 17. Paul looks at himself as the libation. They were the main thing, he only poured out on them—his death the accompaniment of the sacrifice. (*cf.* for the sacrifice Rom. 15:16). The great thing was that Christ should have His people; if Paul suffered for it, it was all right.

There is no hardness in the Christian or in Christ. When it is the service of God and faithfulness we must not regard father or mother. The Lord sent His mother away whenever she came to Him in His service. It is not the destruction of natural affection, but superiority of Christ—

God coming in or else it is idolatry. If I get honey when I am fighting the Philistines it lightens the eyes. I get refreshment by the way, but I cannot put honey in the sacrifice. The moment it becomes an object it is not allowed.

Verse 29. "Receive him ... in the Lord. It brings in Christ, into the kindly relationships. You do not get this in the Old Testament—divine life brought into the circumstances of human life.

Chapter 3

What is called holiness is generally righteousness. For acceptance righteousness is wanted, not holiness. Righteousness looks at meeting every claim of the relationships in which we are. Holiness is the activity of the nature in its own delights, or the abhorrence of evil. There is the new nature in us, but no nature can exist without an object. Our own righteousness and law go together, the righteousness of God and faith. The two parts of righteousness are, first Christ died to clear away my sins (Rom.3-5); second, that in which God has His glory (Rom.8). The position is never fully brought out until the first man is cleared away; then I find myself in the Second before God. In Corinthians the aspect of righteousness is higher than in Romans because more connected with the counsels of God. What Paul looks for, as an object, is what forms him now. If we were risen what would trouble be? He is looking for a condition in which he will have done with the whole thing. Instead of suffering being a terror to him, it was only making him more like Christ. You could not kill a dead man (2 Cor.1:9). He would be nearer being raised from the dead when he was dead than when alive. Christ's resurrection had set aside the power of death. Verse 10 presents power along the road; verse 11, future resurrection. The power is not the object. It is present attainment by future resurrection—a thing already accomplished in Christ. It is resurrection from *among* the dead: there is no attainment at all in the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection from among the dead is the resurrection of those in whom God has the same delight as He has in Christ—it is the expression of it. That they

without us should not be made perfect proves that the Old Testament saints are included in it (Heb.11:40).

Two things Paul was running after, to be with Christ, and to be like Christ.

There are three classes in the chapter. First the perfect Christian who is not stopping short of being raised like Christ in glory. Second, real Christians but in the imperfect state of not having got hold of this. They rest in the work of Christ, they love Him, but have not got the power of the calling on high. Third, those who bear the name of Christ but are not His at all.

Chapter 4

The last chapter presents superiority to circumstances and the Lord proved sufficient.

Verse 6. The request might be foolish. The answer is not promised, but the peace that God is in to keep our hearts. Nothing disturbs the throne of God. Thus free my heart can be occupied with what suits God—the bright and blessed things of His own presence

Chapter 1

The Epistle to the Philippians has a peculiar character rather distinct from the other epistles; though there are indeed traces of the same in the Epistle to Timothy. Taking it characteristically, it is **the epistle of Christian experience**.

We do not get doctrinal teaching in it, but the experience of Christian walk—not the experience of one who is going wrong, but of one who is going right, the experience which the Spirit of God gives. The apostle is perfectly clear as to his position, yet here he counts himself not to have attained anything. He is on the road, he has not got there; but Christ has laid hold on him. When I speak of my place in Christ, as in Ephesians, it is in heavenly places; but, as a matter of fact, we are here going on through the earth full of temptations and snares.

Philippians gives us—not of course failure—but the path of the Christian, salvation being looked at throughout as at the end of the wilderness. Paul had no doubt that Christ had laid hold on him for this blessedness, but he had not got there. **Salvation is always looked at as the close of the journey in Philippians.**

It is so much the more remarkable as to the Christian's path that you never find sin mentioned from the beginning to the end of the epistle. The thorn in the flesh was needed when Paul came down from Paradise; it was not that the flesh had become any better. **The thorn was something to hinder sin, something that made him outwardly contemptible in his ministry.** Every one, probably, would have a different thorn according to his need. There is no change in the flesh, but the power of the Spirit of God is such that the flesh is kept down. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" would not be necessary if the flesh were any better. It is not that there is any uncertainty as to salvation or acceptance, but that we should so walk through the wilderness that the flesh should be shut up, as it were. Suppose I have a

troublesome man in the house, if I keep him locked up, I am quite easy about him; but sometimes we are foolish enough to leave the door open. God looks at us as dead with Christ, and we are called on to reckon ourselves dead. I have a title to do it because Christ has died, and I am crucified with Christ. It is not only that we are born of God, but we have died with Christ,

Up to the middle of Romans 5 sins are treated of, and atonement; in verse 12 nature is dealt with. We have each our own sins, but "by one man's disobedience" we have the same nature, we are all in the same boat; the remedy for this is that we have died with Christ. You cannot say of a man lying dead on the floor, 'You have got bad passions and self-will'; he has neither passions nor self-will, he is dead.

Then we have the power of Christ. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." You say you are in Christ, then your acceptance is perfect; if you are in Christ, Christ is in you: then let me see Christ and nothing else.

If you are dead, you cannot live on in sins. If you have Christ, it is through His death you have got Him. In Colossians 3 we have God sees us as dead; in Romans 6 I reckon myself dead; in 2 Corinthians 4 we have "bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." This is going very far indeed. Death to a Paul was so realised that only the life of Jesus works in him.

In chapter 1 we see the position and life of the Christian in this scene; in chapter 2 we see the pattern of Christ; in chapter 3 the energy that carries the Christian through this world, all things being dross and dung that he may win Christ; in chapter 4 we see the Christian's superiority to all circumstances. We have in this epistle the whole character of Christian life; this assumes that our place in Christ is settled. You cannot manifest Christ if you have not Christ. Assuming that Christ has borne our sins, and that we have died with Him, we get on that foundation the unfolding of the path of the Christian, the manifestation of this life we have got from God (a thing John looks at

abstractedly in itself); "he that is born of God doth not commit sin." The Christian is to manifest the life of Christ, and nothing else. "Ye are" (not ought to be) "the epistle of Christ," and let Christ be read in you as plainly as the law in the tables of stone. **As Christ represents us before God, so you appear in the presence of the world for Christ.**

It is a great thing to say that my heart is so full of Christ that nothing but Christ appears. If I am in lowliness of heart before Him, living by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, I shall manifest Christ. In these days when the word of God is so called in a question, it is blessed to think how a single verse of scripture was sufficient for Him for authority, and sufficient for the devil, who had not a word to say.

There is no uncertainty as to the faithfulness of Christ in bringing us through the wilderness. The moment the Christian looks at himself in Christ, there is no "if"; but the moment you get a Christian in the wilderness, there are "ifs"; not that there is the smallest doubt, but to bring in dependence. We are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," this suffices, but dependence. I am "the righteousness of God in him." "If ye hold fast the beginning of your confidence"; if I hold fast I am to be trusted. There must be positive dependence every moment; I learn that. The mischief of the state of the heart is that, as to will, man has got independent. The whole thing for us is to get to absolute dependence on infallible faithfulness, on unwearied love to carry us through. The heart is brought back to blessed dependence; the dependence is blessed, but the sense of that faithful love is unfailing joy and rest. It is not that the "if" is not true, but the Father's hand will never let it take place. We have grace to help in every time of need; without Him we can do nothing; with Him, in a certain sense, everything. We learn here that **I can never excuse myself if I let the flesh act. The existence of the flesh does not give a bad conscience otherwise we should never have a good one.**

"And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in all knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent." There is growth. What I

desire to press is, the practical place into which God has brought us in grace to Himself. "Thou hast guided them by thy strength to thy holy habitation." That is where you are brought: God has brought you to Himself. It is not a rule imposed, but Christ revealed. The question for you as Christians is, Are you walking in the light as God is in the light? God is light and love; His essential names. You are brought to God without a veil, and there is light on everything you do.

God has brought us to know Christ: "This is my beloved Son," that is what I delight in. The more we look at Him, the more we see there is the place God has brought us. If heaven opens on Him, it opens on us; if God owns Him as Son, He owns us as sons.

Now we have to learn Christ. Has Christ had such a place in your hearts to-day that the things which spring from Christ sprung from you? Have you understood that Christ has brought you to Himself? Now especially it is important that Christians should be Christians. What He was before God in perfection reproduced itself before men to please His Father. Are you thus learning Christ day by day? When I look at Christ, I see God manifested in a man in this world, the expression and pattern of what God delights in. **I am not before God on the ground of what I have done, or what I am, but on the ground of Christ.** There is for us this continually learning Christ. God has been revealed to us; we have seen what He is—seen it in light to love it. It is not an effort that I may get more like Christ, but that, according to the knowledge of Him I have got, there should be nothing contrary to that knowledge. One does not expect a babe to be a man. When one sees a babe delighting in its mother, and obedient, it is just as delightful in its way as to see a man.

"That is nothing I may be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, Christ may be magnified in my body whether by life or by death." Whether it were life or death that he came across Christ would be always glorified in his body. The Christian, having his eye on Christ, knows no standard but Christ in glory. We are "to be conformed to the image of his Son"; this is the blessed hope of the Christian and nothing short of it. "As we have borne the

image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; there is no doubt, no uncertainty, of our having it or of what it is. Christ is "the firstborn among many brethren"—they like Him. Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied."

Seeing Christ up there I get this unspeakably simple truth that, when I was a poor sinner, another Man stepped in and set me free. "Let these go their way," Christ said of His disciples; they go away, they run—poor work, but they are safe. He takes the whole thing on Himself, and He is to be the judge. The perfect good of God and the perfect evil of man met at the cross; everything was settled there. The new heavens and the new earth depend upon the cross. The Man who was there made sin is now sitting at the right hand of God in glory. The Holy Ghost comes down and makes me know that my place is settled before God. A sinner cannot have confidence if sin is not put away; but there He is, the pattern of what I am to be, our "forerunner."

I am going to bear the image of the heavenly; I want to attain that, to win Christ, to be like Him for ever. The treasure is indeed in an earthen vessel, but I have got the treasure. I never rest until I am like Christ in glory. Christ is my life; that life lives on Christ as its object; I am going to be like Him, I shall never be satisfied till then. The Spirit of God realises this in our hearts in power. The light that shines from the glory shines in my heart.

Even before chapter 4 how perfectly the apostle puts the heart at peace. "Some preach Christ even of envy and strife": never mind, if Christ is preached. What peace of heart he had! He had been in prison for four years, in the most trying circumstances; "I know that this," he says, "shall turn to my salvation." It is what is behind that faith gets hold of. The wretched Jews, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the sabbath day, send the soldiers to break their legs; and what did they do? They sent one of them right into Paradise.

Paul has been feeding the church ever since from that prison at Rome. "To depart and be with Christ is far better; nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful

for you.” So completely happy, so completely settled that I do not know which to choose! Self is gone. It would be worth while to stay because I can labour for Christ. Christ loves the church: then I shall stay! With him it was labouring for Christ, or living with Christ. Christ had such a place that the power of circumstances disappears. How near he lived to Christ! There was not perfection—not yet; but he had Christ completely. He was living up to Christ in the measure to which he had attained.

We may get a blessed truth, as Peter did, revealed by the Father, a real revelation (I do not question that); but the flesh may not be broken down up to the measure of what we have been taught. Peter was doing Satan’s work, and Christ said to him, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Would not Christ have to call you Satan in something? If we are not bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, our condition of soul is not up to the measure in which we have been taught. Have you the true desire? Is there a locked up chamber in your heart? Christ will open it some day. Can you say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart ... and lead me in the way everlasting”? The Lord grant us wisdom to understand His love!

Chapter 2

In this whole epistle is little or no doctrine, but the practical exhibition of Christian walk by the power of the Spirit of God.

The chapter before us shews us the spirit in which Christ walked down here, as the true character and spirit of the Christian, the meekness and gentleness of Christ, as in chapter 3 we see the energy of divine life. The next chapter gives the energy of divine life; in the last we see superiority to circumstances. In some Christians there is a certain degree of natural energy. When Moses killed the Egyptian, he had not forgotten the fleshly energy of Pharaoh’s court. **Flesh on God’s side can never stand against flesh on the devil’s side.** Moses had to be kept for forty years keeping sheep that he might **learn to be quiet.** If one side of Christian character is wanting, the other is always defective too. You never get one side by itself without even that being defective.

In this chapter we see the perfect blessed giving up of self, and the most delicate consideration of others. Wherever true love is at work, you always reckon on the love of others. Epaphroditus was very uneasy because he perfectly reckoned on the love of the Philippians when they heard that he had been sick. You see the thoughtfulness and considerateness of grace where self is done with. It was perfect in Him. Where there is not the positive power of Christ's presence, self will be there directly.

How gently and graciously the apostle speaks! The Philippians had thought of him in prison. He had heard of disputings among them: Euodias and Syntyche were not of the same mind; but he cannot rebuke them sharply when he had just received their kindness. "Fulfil ye my joy," if you want to make me perfectly happy, you will be like-minded, "having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"—a rebuke, but a very gentle one. The spirit in which he writes is exceedingly beautiful.

Here we find that which in Christ leads to all this. In Him there was the total absence of self; in us there ought to be the suppression of self. "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." This will be no difficulty to us if we are practically with Christ. With Him, if I think of self at all, what do I think of? My faults, of course. I see in Christ such obedience, such love and grace, that I must think of my own failures. If I look at a brother, I see the blood of Christ upon him, I see the Spirit in him when I look on him with the eyes of Christ. Wherever the heart is feeling with Christ, one cannot but see good in others. Paul always speaks first of the good amongst those to whom he writes. There is only one exception to this amongst the epistles. Take Corinthians (which is not an exception): they were going on shockingly ill, and yet he says, before there is a word about the evil "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ, that in everything ye are enriched of him." The Epistle to the Galatians is the exception; there he plunges right into the evil at once. Where doctrine and faith were touched, he was a great deal more severe than when Christians were

walking badly, not that there is any excuse for a bad walk. "I stand in doubt of you," he says to them; but in the next chapter, "I have confidence in you through the Lord his mind rises up to Christ.

In the ordinary path of the Christian, the heart being with Christ, the thing I see in myself is never a good thing—not that it brings distrust, for this is all wrong—it is thinking Christ's heart is like mine! I do not doubt His love, but the effect of living near Him and being with Him is that, while love is perfect, light is perfect too. Suppose one Christian a powerful evangelist, another a teacher: the teacher will think, What a poor evangelist I am! the evangelist will feel, Oh, I know only the elements. He does see Christ in his brother. We are wretched creatures in ourselves, but this is not a cold measure of what a person is, but the thoughts of Christ about others and about self. The man who has a great gift from God will be thinking of bringing it out as pure as he got it in—'He has lit a lantern in my heart: does the light come out as pure as it went in?' It is wonderful the happiness with which a person walks when going through the world in that way. Self is gone. As a Christian, he sees that God has lit up grace in his heart, but alas! the walls of the lantern are sometimes dirty; when he looks at others, he sees they let out a little light any way.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." What was the mind that was in Jesus? It was always coming down. We should call it a long journey from the throne of God to the cross it was very far indeed, and it was always down. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." The more He humbled Himself, the more He was trampled on. He begins His ministry with "Blessed, blessed," He has to end it with "Woe, woe." He goes down, whether trampled on or not, till He can go no lower, down to "the dust of death."

He "being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation." He always was God, but He laid aside the form of God, the outward glory, "and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." He will never cease to be a servant, though Lord of all; He will never give up

this service of love to minister to our blessing. In the condition of Godhead to begin, He takes the form of a servant, and He was always obedient. He had no will of His own: nothing could be more humble than this. We find in this chapter the path the Lord went, from having the form of God, down to that death on the cross. **Adam was in the form of man, and he did set up by robbery to be equal with God**; he was the first example of “he that exalteth himself shall be abased.” The last Adam abases Himself and is exalted; He lays aside His glory and takes a servant’s form.

Man (especially in these days) is just the opposite; man’s mind does not want God. The whole effort is to get the first man up; and you find even Christians joining in this, following where they cannot lead. Are children more obedient, servants more faithful, men of business more honest? It is the exaltation of man’s will and the setting aside of God. The second Man’s path was exactly the opposite; He always went down. Are you content to do this? Are you content to have the mind that was in Christ Jesus, content to be always trampled on? This was God’s path in the midst of evil, and this is what we want to get. People talk about God’s creation—why it was sin made it as it is, not the physical world of course, but the world as we have it. When was the world embellished? By Cain, when he went out from the presence of God. Man tries to make the world pleasant without God; this is the true and real character of the world. You continually hear it said, What harm is there in music? what harm in painting? **There is harm in not one of physical things, the harm is in the use I make of them.** What harm is there in strength? None whatever; but if I use my strength to knock a man down, there is harm in that. The harm is in the use people make of things. What harm was there in the trees of the garden? None. Men have in a certain sense lost God, and they try to get on as well without Him as they can.

Christ was in this world in the form of a servant, a poor carpenter. Love delights to serve, blessed infinite love! Nothing could be more divine than when He gave up “the form of God” and went down, down, till He came to the gibbet—I do not say the cross, for the cross has become

an honoured name—but the actual gibbet. Then God exalts Him as Man.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” We see the perfectness of love that takes the form of a servant and gives up self in everything. If this mind is in you, you do not look at self to look at the good that is there, or to spare yourself suffering. “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us and given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God”; such is the character of divine love come into this world of evil. “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” will not do now. The world would be a paradise if that were done, but it is not a paradise; and what we want is a spirit of love that will carry us through the world. “For us, an offering and a sacrifice to God”; there was in Christ the absolute giving up of self for what is perfectly worthless, and yet with a worthy object. Take the divine side of love; and the worse the object, the greater is the love; but if you take the human side, the greater the object, the greater is the love. We find both in Christ. If I take the creature side, the excellence of the object makes the greatness of the affection; if I take the divine side the worthlessness of the object makes the greatness of the affection. We see divine power come into the midst of evil—there never was anything like it. God could not come among angels as He came in this sinful world. “Unto the glory of God by us.” “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” “Which things the angels desire to look into.”

Christ is the centre of all that. I find His divine Person tracing this path all the way down. He never gives up the service of love. He will reign as King above all; all must confess His Lordship. But the service of love He will never give up; as indeed it is a higher thing. He is made Lord (He was always God, of course), but He makes Himself a servant.

“Jesus knowing that ... he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself.” If He was going out of this world, the disciples might say He is gone into glory

and has left us here; His service is over. No, says the Lord, and He shews them that He does not give up His service. The key to John 13 is this, I cannot stay with you, but you must have a part with Me: a spot will not do there. **He will take the place of a servant even in the glory.** “He shall gird himself ... and will come forth and serve them.” His love is His glory; the nearer we are to Him, the more we shall adore Him.

In 1 Corinthians 15 we read, “Then shall the Son also himself be subject.” He gives up the kingdom which He will rule in, but He keeps His place as Man. He will be the “Firstborn among many brethren” for ever and ever. His ear was bored to the door-post. The slave had a right to go out free after seven years of service, but He says, “I will not go out free,” I will be a servant for ever, when He could have had twelve legions of angels at His command. Down here He was as much God as before He came down, but He had the form of a servant. “He ever liveth to make intercession for us,” and it will be His delight and joy to minister blessing throughout eternity, and thus make it doubly precious to us.

If I get hold of the path, the spirit, the mind of Jesus, nothing could be more hateful to me than anything of self. You never find an act of self in Christ. Not merely was there no selfishness, but there was no self in Him. He has given us the immense privilege of always going down to serve others as He did.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Salvation is always looked at as the end of the journey, as the thing arrived at, in this epistle; therefore he speaks of working it out. “Work out your own salvation”: this is in contrast with Paul’s working, not with God’s work, as people so often misunderstand it to be. Paul was in prison: they had lost him. They had not lost God, but Satan seemed to have got the victory. If you are there with Joshua fighting Amalek, it is a very solemn thing—and if you have not Moses’ hands up, you will be beaten.

There is no uncertainty, but it is exceedingly serious to fight God’s battle against Satan. Perhaps you think it must be easy to fight God’s battles. It is not easy even with the

Lord to help me; it is a most solemn thing that my business is to overcome Satan. There was no conflict in Egypt; the Israelites were slaves there. When out of Egypt, there was both the conflict and the trial of the wilderness. When they got over Jordan, they entered into Canaan, and whenever Joshua crossed the Jordan, conflict characterised their state. "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" There was no circumcision till they crossed the Jordan; the stamp of Egypt was on them till they were dead and risen. It is a solemn thing that I stand in Christ's place, in Christ's name (every Christian does, of course, I mean) in the scene of Satan's power.

We are vessels of God's power against Satan. Here am I standing in Christ's name in Satan's world! God works in me; but this makes it only the more serious still: I should not fail. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings." Before God we never murmur, never dispute. If God were seen, there would not be one murmur, one disputation; and faith realises His presence. It is remarkable as to the exhortation which follows, that if you take it to pieces you see Christ in everything. "That ye may be blameless and harmless"; He was that. He was the Son of God, "without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." He was "the light of the world," while He was in it holding forth the word of life—this is just what He did.

"Ye are the epistle of Christ," filled up with mud it may be) and hard to read, but still ye are the epistle of Christ. "That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." I owe everything to Christ: I owe Him salvation, heaven, everything. I owe Him myself. The heart becomes engaged with this manifestation. He is gone, and He has left us here, and He says, "I am glorified in them."

Is that kind of desire yours?—not the desire of the sluggard who has nothing, who roasteth not that he took in hunting; but the real desire of manifesting Christ—the desire that cannot bear anything that is not Christ? God helps us in this. Paul could speak of "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"; he takes death and holds it on himself. He wants to keep the walls of the lantern bright, and so he would rub them.

“Always”? this is a great deal to say. What we have to do is to carry about with us the dying of the Lord Jesus, and then the flesh would never stir. We fail in this, and the Lord comes in and helps us. “We which live are always delivered unto death.” The flesh is always present, there is no change in that. The Lord knows He has to help us, and He puts us through trials and exercises; the Lord makes everything to work for good to us.

The apostle could say, “delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake.” When we look back to a past life, we have more to be thankful for our trials than for anything else. Till the root is reached, the Lord does not let you go; the heart desires this—would not let the trial slip away, Oh, if we only trusted God, there would be confidence in His love! “Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen.” Are your hearts on the things that are seen, or on the things that are not seen?

There are three spaces in our hearts Christ must be at the bottom of our heart and at the top also it is what is between the two that shews my state. Has your heart been open all day for the things of the world to trot over? Has the highway of your heart been open all day? May God give us to be anything or nothing, so that the Lord Jesus may be everything!

Chapter 3

In this chapter we get the energy that carries the Christian on through the wilderness in view of the glory. It does not give us the meekness and gentleness of Christ like chapter 2, but the energy that counts all but dross and dung to win Him. **Doctrine is not the point in this epistle.** Salvation is always looked on as at the end of the journey. The Christian is viewed as in a race, and in that race he is entirely under the power of the Spirit of God; the flesh is not looked at as acting. Christ is before us: the thing we are predestinated to is to be conformed to His image. There is no thought now, inasmuch as there is a Man in the glory, of any place or object for the Christian but to be **with and like** that Man on high.

As Christ was taken up as man into glory, we shall be taken up the same way to be like Him. The thought of the believer can never rest short of this. Paul says that he wants not to be unclothed, but clothed upon. "To depart and be with Christ" is blessed, but it is still waiting. The apostle here says that He will "change our vile bodies." The cross having come in, it has given us the death of the old man, and the reception of Christ as Head of the new family in glory; we look off from everything to this. The hope that is in Christ is that when He appears we shall be like Him. Thus we look to be like Himself, with Himself surely, but like Himself: **nothing short of this is the object of the believer**. He would grow undoubtedly, but still it is growth by looking at an object we shall never attain to till we are raised from the dead in His image or changed into it.

There is no mending of the flesh, no sanctification of nature, no forming of man as he is; there is death to it. The old man has been entirely and finally judged, but another is now in the glory as man. This we could not have as an object of faith until Christ was risen. God has "provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect"— "perfect," that is, in glory. That could not be, nor was there any title for it, till the work upon the cross; therein is the title and groundwork for all this. There was no connection with Christ as man among the children of Adam; He was a true man, but union there was none whatever. He was one of them, but He was alone. He was a man without sin; we were men with sin: you can never unite the two, for they "are contrary the one to the other." He could come in grace as a true man amongst us, but He abode alone.

In **Hebrews 2** four reasons are given why Christ took flesh and blood: **first**, to make atonement; **second**, for God's glory and counsels; **third**, to destroy him that had the power of death; **fourth**, that He should go through every sorrow, and so have sympathy with us. There was perfect grace in Him, but He was alone. People speak of Him as "bone of our bone," but this is totally false; we are bone of His bone now that He is on high. Wherever you find the thought of Christ being bone of our bone, you get

redemption and atonement made unnecessary, or at any rate muddled up. When atonement has been wrought, then by the Holy Ghost He unites us to Himself, and says we are “members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

Thus we learn that the only thing by which the flesh can be dealt with is death. Until atonement was made, God could not deal with sinners in the way of righteousness; He could forbear— “for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God.” The difference with us is that righteousness is now before Him, and we are in it. Our souls stand in divine righteousness in the presence of God.

The apostle does not talk of sin in the flesh here. The flesh has its religion as well as its lusts, and this is much more attractive than worshipping God in the spirit—the flesh cannot do this. “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh,” such is the flesh’s religion. Paul was the most positive enemy of God all the while. Suppose this blamelessness of Paul—to whose credit was it? Paul’s. Wherever religion is a credit to us, it is not worth anything; worse than that, it deceives us. You may have all the truths which do not test faith, and yet be without this. The time will come when whosoever “killeth you will think that he doeth God service,” They thought they were doing God service, but they would not hear of the truth that tested faith—the Father revealed in the Son.

Thus the whole system of the religion of the flesh is set aside here. It is always the truth that tests faith. Suppose I fast twice in the week, and give tithes of all I possess, to whose credit is this? Mine. The moment I get the cross the flesh is judged, and that is no credit to me. **The thing that tests faith flesh resists.** The disciples would not hear of the Lord’s death, because it tested their faith. Peter, the very man that owned what He was going to build the church on, says, “That be far from thee,” and the Lord has to call him “Satan.” Although he had got a truth, he had not the flesh judged up to the measure of what he knew; he would not have a truth that breaks through the flesh in a way he does not like.

“That I may win Christ”—this is the great principle of the whole chapter, and you get perseverance in it, which is more. Suppose a man just saved, what does he think about the world? That it has deceived him. Leave him for a while, and his family twine round him, and soon he begins to seek the things of the world. Paul saw Christ on the way to Damascus, and he gives up his importance, his Pharisaism, his teaching, everything else, and he counts all but loss that he may win Him. “And *do* count them but dung that I may win Christ”—not “did count,” which would be comparatively easy.

The value of Christ **must be fresh** enough in the soul, as a present thing, to enable one to count all the rest mere dross and dung. **Everybody is governed by the object he is pursuing, and, what is more, everybody judges of others by the thing he is pursuing himself.** One man makes money his object, another pleasure. The man who loves money says, Oh, what a fool that man is to spend so much on his pleasure! and the man who loves pleasure says, What a fool that man is to hoard up his money, it is no better to him than so much clay!

The moment I want to win Christ, all besides is dross and dung. You have only to lay aside every weight, Paul could say, with Christ has his object. only to lay aside is easily said, but the moment it becomes a weight it is easy. When I say, I must get Christ, death may be on the road, but never mind so that I get Him, The desire is not weakened by the eye being dimmed by present things. Paul goes on. There we get testing. He went on looking at Christ. He had found Christ the satisfaction of his soul, and he did not hunger, he did not thirst, as the Lord says, for anything else. **People talk of sacrifices; but there is no great sacrifice in giving up dung. If the eye were so fixed on Christ that these things got that character, it would not be a trouble to give them up.** **The thing gets its character from what the heart is set on. The moment the heart is set on Christ, all the rest becomes dross. The man with one object is the energetic man. The Christian's one object is Christ—the object God has and the object the Spirit gives to the heart of the Christian. Have we only to say that Christ is the one sole object of the heart? are there not**

distractions? We allow other things to come in; the eye is not single.

Paul however would “be found in him, not having mine own righteousness ... but the righteousness which is of God by faith.” The apostle was still looking forward as he is always doing in this Epistle. Here he speaks of righteousness in contrast (not to his sins, but) to his righteousness. A poor man may not part with his old coat; but if you give him a new one instead, he will soon have done with it. The moment the soul has the eye fixed on the Lord Jesus, all our righteousness becomes filthy rags, and the heart revolts from mixing it up with Him. When the Spirit is come, He will convince the “world of sin, because they believe not on me.” The world’s sin was proved by not believing on Jesus; all are under sin together. The one single righteous Person was turned out of the world: where will you find righteousness now? At the right hand of God. The world will never see Christ again except in judgment. Satan was never called “the prince of this world” till Christ came, till the cross. When He comes, Satan raises the whole world against Him. There is the prince of this world, the Lord says. He might rule before, but in the cross Satan was proved the prince of this world.

Again, we hear of “the righteousness which is of God by faith”; not now righteousness of man for God, but of God for man. “Being made conformable unto his death.” In a world where Christ had been rejected, the object of all my hopes is at the right hand of God. I have got a life completely paramount over death. The resurrection of Christ was past sin, past Satan’s power, past judgment, past death. The second Man had gone into death—was made sin; but He is risen, and all that is past. God has been glorified, and death belongs to us now as we belonged to it in the first man. We have got this divine life which is above everything in the world. If I know Him, I want to know the power of His resurrection that left everything behind. What comes next? “The fellowship of his sufferings. Being made conformable unto his death”; all was gain to Paul. Do we not see the blessedness of being a martyr?

“If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead”: death might be on the road, but death would be positive gain because one would be like Christ. Christ risen becomes power in me going through the same scene as He did. The apostle was a man of like passions with us, but he was single-eyed. Here he gives us not only the Christ he was going to win, but something he was going to win for himself the resurrection from among the dead.”

In Mark 9:9-10 we read of “the rising from the dead,” about which the disciples questioned; every Pharisee, every orthodox Jew, believed in the resurrection of the dead. What did the resurrection of Christ mean? It was God’s seal on everything He was, and everything He had done during His life here. He took Him out from among all the other dead. If He takes people out from among the rest of the dead because He delights in them, that is the seal of their *acceptance*. Paul says, No matter what it costs me, I will attain to that. What condition is the saint raised in? “Sown in weakness, raised in power; sown in dishonour, raised in glory.” “Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

As God put His perfect seal on Christ and Christ’s work, and raised Him, so, when He raises us up, He puts His seal on us: only it is because of His righteousness, not our own. The apostle was apprehended of Christ Jesus, but he had not got it yet. What I am looking for is to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold for me. When we attain to that, we get Christ Himself and being like Christ; we do not, could not, get that down here. Perfection as to the state of the Christian means perfect conformity to the image of Christ in glory.

Three classes are spoken of here, the “perfect,” those otherwise minded, and those who are the “enemies of the cross of Christ.” The perfect are those who have entered by the power of the Spirit of Christ into this truth of being perfectly like Him. Many a Christian knows only the forgiveness of sins; he has not got the thing that is before him, but the thing that is behind him. The thought of having Christ in glory and being like Him governed Paul completely; but, like a man going through a strait passage with a lamp at the other end of it, he got more of the light

as he went on, though as yet he had not attained. Every step the Christian takes he has got more of the light: "beholding ... we are changed into the same image," though in a certain sense we have none of it. One has not merely seen redemption that has given him the object, but he is running after the object. He has got what Christianity gives—got all of it, and this in a certain sense is perfection. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling (calling above) of God in Christ Jesus." Till we are above, we have not got the caring—the effect of it, I mean. It cost Paul suffering, it cost him difficulty, but it filled his heart with joy—filled it with Christ.

You know persons who have found they are poor sinners, who see their sins are forgiven, but they do not see farther; they are "otherwise minded," but God will reveal this to them: wait a while, have patience. "But 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." Those who call themselves Christians and love the world. Men who mind earthly things are the enemies of the cross of Christ. The cross and the glory go together, not at the same time of course, but the one depends on the other.

The cross of Christ toward this world is saying, "The world seeth me no more." The cross is perfect security for heaven, but entire judgment of this world. Paul's heart having followed Christ up there, his object, his heart, is there. "One thing I do"—that is the Christian. You may be in various circumstances, you may be a carpenter as Christ was; but the Christian's "conversation is in heaven." What is he waiting for? For Christ to come and take him to Himself. His heart is fixed on Christ's Person. He has found Him at the cross, who has carried him into heaven with Him. I am changed into the same glory as Christ, while it is acting on my soul that I am to be like Him; it governs the heart the whole way.

The righteousness of the law was the righteousness of man, the law being the measure of man's righteousness. Christ Himself is our righteousness. I have got life from God and righteousness: both are Christ. The power that raised Christ from the dead the Spirit will exercise to raise or change our bodies. These are God's thoughts about us.

What am I going to get? Christ, and to be like Christ; then do you run after Him. Can we say we are doing that? I distrust the moral condition of the man that thinks much of crimes. The thief went into paradise to be with Christ, the moral man went out.

Can we say, "This one thing I do?" I have but one thing, and I am pushing on. If you wanted a person to get to London, whether would you rather meet him, four miles from London with his back to it, or four miles from Holyhead with his face to London? **Even a babe may have his face turned to Christ. Are you going God's way?** Can we honestly say, with glory before us, with Christ before us, "One thing I do"? Which way does your eye turn? Which way are you going? God has only one way—Christ.

There is the constant solicitation of distractions on the road: quite true, everything round us is a temptation. When the people came to Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, of what was it the occasion to Him? Of perfect obedience. Of what to Peter? Of temptation. What one looks for in the Christian is a single eye. **One of the comforts of heaven will be that there I shall not want my conscience; I want it every moment now; I cannot let my heart out now.**

The Lord give us in all liberty of heart so to see Him before us that we may run hard after Him, having our hearts kept by the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Chapter 4

This chapter takes up the entire superiority to circumstances which characterises the Christian. The apostle had gone through very trying circumstances; he had been in prison for four years, chained to a heathen soldier—a terrible kind of thing. There he had been to have the experience that no circumstances could ever separate from the love of Christ, and that the life of Christ was paramount to everything. Christ felt all, far more than we do; but there was that which sustained Him and made it positive joy to Him. It is a great thing to see that the power of Christ in us can set us entirely above everything.

Paul knew how to suffer need, and he knew how to abound—a far more dangerous thing; for if we suffer need, we are thrown on God necessarily. What we find all through this epistle is the power of the Spirit of God raising him above all circumstances and sorrows; it is always the power of the Spirit of God which sustains him.

Sin is never mentioned in the epistle, nor flesh as a gross thing, but only in its religious shape. But we get the power of the Spirit of God carrying us through this world where temptations are: **not that the flesh is any better, but there is such a thing as living above it.** This is a very important principle for all of us. It is true that “in many things we offend all”; but Scripture never supposes that we are going to offend; and we can never excuse ourselves if we do offend. The flesh is as bad as ever; and what we get is, not the grace of God for it, but a thorn in the flesh, the thorn being from the grace of God, of course.

If we are conscious of weakness and are leaning only on grace, we need not offend: there is power for us. It is possible that at a given moment I may not have power; but this is because I have been going wrong previously. Christ was witnessing while Peter was denying; but Christ had been praying while Peter had been sleeping. The armour should be put on before the battle, not just at the battle. When Satan came to Him with his wiles, the Lord had only to rest quietly in obedience: there was no longer reasoning, no confusion about it. Satan says, “Command that these stones be made bread”; the Lord answers He is come to obey. For it is written that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Then Satan tells Him to cast Himself down (that is, not to trust God), but is told, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” These are wiles; but when Satan comes openly, then resist Satan. “Get thee hence, Satan”; then he flees. We have not to overcome him who is overcome; but we have to overcome his wiles by the word in obedience.

The only effect of trying circumstances is to give much deeper acquaintance with the Lord’s faithfulness, and withal much deeper joy. At the end of four years in prison Paul could say, “Rejoice in the Lord always”; he had

nothing else to rejoice in. He says, as it were, The more I know of every trial and hindrance in my work as an apostle, the more I can tell you, You can rejoice in the Lord always. It is a beautiful thing to see Paul the person to say, You must be always rejoicing. **The thing that hinders our rejoicing is not trouble, but being half-and-half.** If in the world, his conscience reproaches the Christian; if he meets spiritual Christians, he is uncomfortable there; in fact he is happy nowhere. A man's affections do not hinder his work for his children. If we were serving Christ simply, we should go back to Him all the happier when the service was done.

We never can give a reason for not rejoicing in Christ, except the evil of our hearts. Here we get what is so important practically—to rejoice always. Any one can rejoice in the Lord when the Lord gives him what he likes. “Bless the Lord at all times”: that is the testing point. “In everything give thanks.” “Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want”; not, I have got blessing and shall not want, but “Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” “He restoreth my soul.” He stood by me when in misery, sorrow, failure it may be. I may get my own weakness, death in the way; but the table is spread in the very presence of my enemies (like Joshua and the Israelites eating the passover before ever a blow was struck). God's natural work is to give us green pastures and still waters; but He makes everything work together for our good: it is not the circumstances, it is the Lord. “I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever.” After the sorrowful and trying things Paul had passed through, he is full of comfort. He had had green pastures, pleasant things from the Lord but he rejoices all through, whatever the circumstances.

Again, he says, “Let your moderation [yieldingness] be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand.” He does not insist upon his rights, because he trusts the Lord; he is not careful. Abraham says to Lot, “Go to the left and I will go to the right.” Lot chooses Sodom—always the effect of choosing for oneself. The part Abraham seemed to have lost was Sodom and Gomorrah.

Then there is another exceedingly strong thing connected with it: how long is this going to last? “The Lord is at

hand.” You have got your joy and strength elsewhere, and “the fashion of this world passeth away.” If conscious that my portion is in Christ, the looking for the Lord, who is my portion, makes me to sit loose to everything here. If our expectation, if the feeling of our hearts, is that the Lord is at hand (I do not mean prophecy, but the personal expectation of the saint himself), it must be so. **What event is there between you and heaven?** The only one is our going up there. If I am looking for Christ to come straight down from heaven and take me up, what event is there between? It is no great wonder if the Christian has power to go through circumstances and master them; he has joy in the Lord that nothing can touch. In waiting for Christ what must be done before He comes? “The day and the hour knoweth no man”; but there is only one thing that must be done, the gathering in of the saints. “The longsuffering of God is salvation.” “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise,” but He is waiting on poor sinners. Prophecy does not speak to us of heaven; faith looks to heaven, and sees what is there. Prophecy is God’s politics, and it saves us from human politics—a great mercy too. Our portion is Christ Himself.

There are trials in the way; but then you get, “Be careful for nothing.” This is a magnificent sentence and leaves no loophole. It has often stopped my mouth completely when I have thought of the church, the saints. “Be careful for nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known unto God.” He does not say, Do you go and do the will of God, but reckon on God that you are going to get the best thing. Present your requests to God; thank Him before you get them. He does not say you will get them always; it is the interest which God takes in us that is the point here. Paul besought the Lord three times that the thorn should be taken away. Indeed I am not going to take away what I sent for your good! such virtually was the answer. “My grace is sufficient for you.” “And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts.” This is not peace with God; or that your heart keeps the peace either. The peace keeps your heart, and it is the peace of God, the peace He is in. My own peace I understand very well. The peace He is in

keeps my heart, and it passes all understanding—of course it does, because it is “the peace of God.” I do not know what I may get; but of one thing I am sure—I shall get the very best thing, though it may come in a way very grating to my feelings.

When this is the case, I can think of what is good. God thinks of my trouble; I can now think of what is good. “Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are of good report ... if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.” What a blessed condition of soul this is, beloved friends! There is no burden in my cares: I cannot burden God, when I put them there. “And the God of peace shall be with you.” Cast your care on God, and the peace of God will keep you; walk as a Christian ought to walk, and the God of peace will be with you. You have a companion in the path of trouble and sorrow, and such a companion too! “The God of peace!” He is never called the God of joy. joy is an uncertain thing, peace is always there. This word continually through Scripture is attached to God’s name. Where peace is, there is no trouble. Rejoicing in the Lord always, his moderation known unto all men, the Lord at hand, no care—what a happy picture of the Christian!

There is more: “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.” Observe the delicacy of the apostle here; “I am glad that at the last” **this proves that he had been in trouble, in want**—I do not mean you were forgetting me, but ye lacked opportunity. I have learned in whatsoever state I am to be content; this is the effect of trusting Christ in it all. “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.” He was in abundance sometimes; and this is much more dangerous: **we are apt to rest in the gift instead of looking at the giver**; but with Paul it brought out only thankfulness.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” This is the epistle of experience. It is not people can do all things, but “I can do all things”; Christ is always sufficient. Paul found it so. He had gone through perils of all kinds, but Christ was always sufficient. He was in abundance now, but Christ in all things was sufficient. It

is a blessed truth that, though we may fail Him, we cannot be in circumstances Christ is not sufficient for. Whether it be the church or individual saints, it is impossible to be in a place for which Christ is not sufficient. Paul was in danger from the flesh, and a thorn was sent to him. The thorn was something which made him in some way despicable in his ministry. The wonderful effect of his preaching, then, did not come from him; the evidence of the power of Christ was there. Then let me have it, Paul says: "I glory in my infirmities." The thorn was not power, but it was the way of power; the flesh is broken down completely that Christ may come in. If there had been a fourth heaven, the flesh would have been only the more puffed up: you cannot correct what is evil in its nature. What came to make nothing of Paul is not power, but Christ is there. 2 Corinthians 12 takes two sides; we have there a man in Christ (a man in the flesh totally put down), and then Christ in a man, the other side of the Christian life—the power of Christ in us, and with us.

Do not say, A Christian can do all things; it is quite true in the abstract, but not what the apostle says. "I can do all things through Him who strengtheneth me." "I have learned in whatsoever state I am to be content." He found Christ always sufficient. His whole heart was full at the same time of affectionate remembrance of the Philippians. "Even at Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."

I think it is beautiful how the apostle does not take himself out of a man. Superiority is to go through circumstances and feel them all, and yet to be above them. Look how he speaks of Epaphroditus in Philippians 2. As a doctrine, if he had died, he would have gone to heaven; but it was not that. He felt it as it was, it was not a hard mind that cast off the trial. When the Lord saw the widow, "He was moved with compassion." There was no insensibility in Him, but in going through the circumstances He was sensible of them, yet above them. The way we should walk is as never governed by circumstances, not in insensibility, but in superiority. Christ is the answer to it: cast your care on Him.

Paul attaches all the importance of divine grace to their service. You see what a link there is in the church of God even in gifts. Poor old bed-ridden women may have prayed for Paul. "My God shall supply all your need." It is "my God," he knew Him—the God I know, the One I have been with, as if answering for the God he knew. How his heart gets up to the source of it all! The heart gets back to God. What was to be the measure of supply? Was it their need? No, "his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." We find here a blessed picture of the way in which the Spirit of God lifts him, while feeling everything, above the circumstances. It is perfect impressibility by the circumstances here below, but we have this source of strength in Christ Himself. The thing I have to learn is my own weakness.

We make a mistake about the apostles, we often think of them as if they were eagles soaring above all. Paul says, "I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling." There were great people in Corinth. Paul was a blessed vessel, but the vessel must be made nothing of. What we have to learn is being nothing that Christ may be everything. If a person is humble, he does not want to be humbled; but if he is not humble, he must be.

Are we content to be nothing? Are we content to walk in the secret of God? The Lord give us to learn practically what it is thus to pass through this world. You can get neither the Christian nor the church in a state that Christ is not sufficient for. The Lord give us to know our nothingness.

Philippians 1

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, and even in that to the Colossians, we see our place with Christ; but in Philippians the believer is seen passing through the world—as a Christian walking in it. **There is no doctrine in the epistle**; the believer is seen pressing toward the mark. And another thing: he looks at this course as run in the power of the Spirit of God: this is what characterises the Christian, that he is entirely running the race in that power. So **there is no sin in this epistle**—not the word sin even—and no conflict, in the proper sense of the word. Not that he has attained, but he is never doing anything but one thing—running in the power of the Spirit of God towards the goal. He had not attained, but he was doing nothing but running to attain. He was raised above all in himself, and in the world—entirely above all circumstances.

It is the epistle of experience, but according to the power of the Spirit of God. We learn this lesson, that though we fail, yet there is the possibility of running on in the power of the Spirit of God. Not that flesh is changed, or the thought of having attained admissible (there is no perfection down here); but the possibility of always acting consistently with the calling to get to Christ in glory. There is no looking for points of progress in the world; it sets him above every kind of circumstance, or contradiction, or difficulty, for he sees the path of the Christian entirely above them all.

To have a path shews that man had got out of God's place where He had set him. The moment we have a way it shews that we are not at home. It is blessed to have a way in the wilderness (of course, Christ is the way). Adam wanted no way; he would have stayed in the garden in quietness if he had obeyed God. But we have set out from Egypt, and we are not in Canaan; we go towards the goal. Numbers of things come out on the way, but all we have got to do is to run. We get a great deal more of Christ at

every step; like a lamp at the end of a passage, we get more and more of it as we go on; we have not got the lamp yet, though we get more of the light of it every step we take. But there is entire deliverance from self as governing us, and a motive above circumstances, so that, though not insensible to them, they exert no influence over us.

“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.” The Philippians had taken a zealous part in the gospel, and had shewn a loving spirit. How constant the intercession of the apostle was for them! **Every time he prayed he was making mention of them.** Mark how he carries the church of God on his heart; and it was the same way with individuals. He was thinking of all the good in them, and thanking God for it. See the kind of interest he had for the saints; he was always thinking of them. Even to the Corinthians he says, “I thank my God always on your behalf.”

What Christ thinks of we should think of. If Christ is my life, and by the Spirit the spring of my thoughts, I shall have His thoughts in everything, for there is that which is right according to Christ. I have to be in the midst of circumstances as Christ would be, and that is Christian life. It is never necessary we should do anything wrong—never necessary we should act in the flesh; though it is there, why am I to think by it? I shall not, if I am full of Christ, for it is He who suggests the thoughts to me.

If I get into Christ’s mind and thoughts, I shall not bear to see evil in saints; I want them like Christ. He is doing the work now in the heart of the saints—“that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word”—and I must be going along with Him in the same Spirit; and I must be all right myself, or I cannot do that. Christ gives Himself first for His people, and then He sets about to cleanse them, and make them what He would have them; and that should be our heart’s desire to do in intercession.

There is plenty of power for this, though we are dreadfully low. He can suit His grace now just as in the brightest days of the apostle. There was much more to delight in when David was hunted as a partridge on the mountains, than in all the glory of Solomon for then there was the power of faith. It is with all saints that we are to “apprehend”; Eph. 3: 18. We shorten our own blessing if we do not take them [the saints] all in. There is competency with Christ; and if I go on with Him, I must have peace about them.

Praying for saints gives a person the power of seeing all the good in them. We see this in the epistles, with one exception, that to the Galatians, where the apostle does not speak of what he could commend, but goes straight into all the evil, for they were turning away from the foundation. If we prayed more for the saints we should have more joy in them, and more courage about them. It is always wrong to lose courage about the saints, though it is possible it might come to be like Jeremiah: “Pray no more for this people.” The Lord is always there, and love cannot fail; so we can reckon on it with joy, and comfort, and courage. Even when Paul had said to the Galatians, “I am afraid of you,” he adds, soon looking to Christ, “I have confidence in you through the Lord.” He had the saints under Christ’s eye for a blessing. How much are we looking with Christ’s heart at all the saints, with comfort and courage that there is grace enough for them? “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”; and, as he says further on, “that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke.”

“Both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.” We are little aware how real the unity of the Spirit is: we have greatly lost the reality of it, though it is owned as a truth. It is a unity by a living power which is in every saint, so that the thing must be: “if one member suffer,” not all ought to, but all do, “suffer with it.” The body may be in such a mortified state as to have little feeling left; but, supposing there were a work of the Spirit in India, do you think it would not revive the saints here? So those people

who were praying for Paul, when God strengthened him, praise returned to God from them all. The working of the Spirit of God tells in blessing on all who hear. But when he had to say, "All have forsaken me" (they had not forsaken Christ, but they had no courage to go into danger), Paul went on alone. It is plain if I have a pain in my body all my nerves are hurt by it; I cannot read or work so well. There may be a deadening of the spiritual nerves so that there is very little feeling, but it cannot be destroyed.

At verse 8 we get into the tone of the epistle. The apostle was no forgetful person; he remembers every little trait of kindness done to him, and he prays that they might have all kinds of knowledge and spiritual judgment, so that they might do things just fit to be done—that they might know in what one thing differs from another—that they might be connoisseurs in the Christian path; not only not fall into sin, but have the knowledge of just the right thing to do in the circumstances; for the standard is the satisfying the heart of Christ, not "Where is the harm?" The apostle desires that they might discern things now as they will be when brought into the light in that day of Christ. It is as if he said, I want you to think of the Lord Jesus, and know what will please the heart of Christ. There is the delight of pleasing Christ, and the delighting in the thing that pleases Him as well, by the active energy of the Spirit of God.

Then see how he rises above all the trials of his four years of imprisonment, two at Caesarea and two at Rome. "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." He might have reasoned: If I had not gone up to Jerusalem, and there listened to these Jews persuading me to things, I might still be at liberty preaching the gospel. He does not do thus; and let me say, beloved friends, **there is nothing more foolish than to be looking at second causes**. Perhaps we may not have been wise, but the man who lives above things here knows that every one of them works together for good. All would turn to his salvation, he says, "through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." And we see here that there is the increased activity and energy of the Spirit of

God— “the supply,” as the apostle speaks; so that, though we cannot look to Him to come (as He has come), we can and ought to be looking for the “supply,” and His ministering grace through the word.

“Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.” We see here that perfection in the flesh is all nonsense, for Paul was looking to be like Christ in glory. The heart is always upright when it says, “For me to live is Christ.” He had no object but Christ, and he walked day by day by that—Christ as source, Christ as object, Christ as character; all the way through, Christ was his life, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that the rage of man and Satan had no power over him. Self was practically gone. When he looked at himself he did not know what to choose—whether to go and rest with Christ, or to remain and serve Him. To be with Him was better, but then he could no longer labour for Him. Thus self was gone as a motive, and he counts on Christ for the church, and the moment he sees “it is necessary for you that I remain,” he says, “I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.” **He decides his own trial before Nero.** When thinking of himself he did not know which to choose, but when he thinks of those dear to Christ needing his presence he says, “I know I shall abide.”

The Lord grant, beloved brethren, that He should be our only object, and that we should not let ourselves be distracted from it, so that we may say, “This one thing I do.” The Lord give us grace to be the true epistles of Christ till He come. What a bright and blessed witness the church of God would then be!

If we have less fighting and fears than Paul, it is because we have less energy.

Philippians 2

I desire first to say a little word on the closing verses of chapter 1: “In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.” It is not merely that he wants to guard

them against this, but he assures them that conflict is the natural state of the Christian—"Having the same conflict which ye saw in me." Here it was positive trial that they were in; but the whole of the Christian life is one of conflict with Satan; not that we need to be always thinking of it, if we have on the whole armour of God; but if we are not in the consciousness of Christ's victory, we are in danger of being terrified; and though we know little of this conflict, yet in a small degree we do. When Satan is resisted, Christ is then in the conflict, and we know that Christ has bound him, and he has been completely overcome; so it is "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." If we are walking with Christ, the apparent power is much greater with Satan and the world than with us; but it is all nothing; it is all a mistake to be terrified by it. What does it matter if the cities are walled up to heaven, if they tumble down, and you walk in over them?

You see, beloved friends, it is not a question of the difficulties, as we see in the case of Peter walking on the sea. He walked on the water to go to Jesus; but when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid. But if the water had been calm as a mill-pond, he could not have walked on it; you never heard of a man able to walk on water of any kind. It was all a mistake in what he was looking at. What we want to remember is that Christ has bound Satan; so now He can spoil his goods. He allows Satan to cast some into prison to be tried, but Satan gains nothing by that; when he meets a person walking with Christ, he has no power against him at all. We may have suffering, but this is what God has "given"; as we see in Moses, "esteeming"—he does not say reproach, but—"the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." So that rough seas or smooth seas are all the same; we sink if Christ is not with us there, and we walk on them if He is.

To turn to chapter 2. It is astonishing the grace which associates us with Christ; we are called to have the same mind as Christ. Here we get the lowliness of the Christian life, as in the next chapter we have the energy of the Christian life. Here it is in following the pattern of Christ, a lowliness shewn in esteem of others, and in perfect

consideration for others, and in gracious gentleness of demeanour in connection with the things of every-day life. Thus he tells them he would keep Timotheus, and send him to them as soon as he should know how it would go with him—reckoning on their true interest in all that regarded him; but he would not keep Epaphroditus, but send him, for he had been ill, and the Philippians had heard it, and were full of anxiety about him; as a child might say, My mother will be in a terrible way when she hears I am so ill. So Paul would send him that they might see him. In little things this considerateness is seen in Paul, this thorough thoughtfulness for others. Even the world can see it is lovely; their very selfishness delights in it.

The Philippians had shewn these things he speaks of in their thoughtfulness for Paul, yet they **were not quite united in Christ**. But he does not like to come with a rebuke in the midst of all their love for him. He says, I see how you care for me, but if you want to make me thoroughly happy, be of one mind, “fulfil ye my joy.” **It is in the most delicate way that he rebukes them—a gentle hint**; but they needed the exhortation.

Then he goes on to shew the principles on which it is founded. “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” It is a kind of impossibility if you look at it in one way; for if you are better than I, it is evident I cannot be better than you. But when the heart is thoroughly lowly, walking with Christ, and delighting in Christ, he thinks himself a poor creature with nothing but the grace of Christ to think of, and never sees anything but defects in himself; all the grace he sees in Christ; and, seeing this grace, even if he is using it, he feels what a poor instrument he is, the flesh hindering and spoiling the vessel, and not letting the light shine out.

But when he looks at his brother, he sees all the grace Christ has poured into him. What the Christian sees is Christ in his brother, and all the good qualities in him. Paul could say even to the Corinthians, who were going on shockingly, “I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ.” He begins by recognising all the good. Love took hold of

all the good it could, and thus he got their hearts to listen to the rebukes. **I detect the grace in my brother, and I do not see the evil at work in his heart; but I do see it in my own.** When Moses came down from the mount, he wist not that his face shone. What made it shine was not looking at his own face—of course we know he could not do that—but looking at the glory; and it shines forth from us in the measure in which we look simply and purely at it. I see in my brother all the gentleness, graciousness, courage, faithfulness; and in myself all the defects. As I said, of course, if you are better than I, I cannot be better than you; but it is a question of the spirit in which the Christian walks; vain-glory is gone; and it cannot be otherwise if the heart is on Christ. It is not giving me a false estimate of myself; but when I look at the grace, it is Christ. Of course I must look at myself sometimes, and judge myself; but the best thing is not to have to look at myself at all. “Look not every man on his own things.”

Then he turns to the principle on which this is founded: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Here we get the path of Christ from the glory of the Godhead to the cross; He never did anything but go down—the exact opposite of the first Adam. “Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God”; not only He bore everything patiently; that is true; but another side of the truth—“He made himself of no reputation.” **He laid aside the form of Godhead, and was found as a man;** and, being a man, He took upon Him the form of a servant. True, even coming in the form of a man, there was soon seen, in word and work and spirit and way, all moral glory shining out; but He, having laid glory aside, was always going down in lowliness till there was no lower place. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”

There is the **double step** in His descent. **The first was laying aside the form of God;** the second, that, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient. There is nothing so humble as obedience, for then we have no will at all. He was not only obedient, but obedient unto death (self given up

altogether, not only the will); and not only to death, but the death of the cross—the gibbet, as it would be in our day; then for slaves and malefactors only. From the form of God right down to death, obedience and humiliation all the way, the opposite in everything of the first Adam, who was not in the form of God, but set up to be as gods, and was disobedient unto death; the exact opposite to Christ in the spirit and character of his ways.

And as God says, “He that exalteth himself shall be abased,” Adam was humbled because he exalted himself. Christ waited till God exalted Him; He humbled Himself, wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him. God sets Him as Man over all the works of His hands. Hence we read, “There is one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ.” This is not a question of His nature, but of the place in which He is set. God has put all things under His feet as Man. All things were created by Him, and for Him, but He will have it all as Man, and thus it is He takes joint-heirs. He is heir of all things as Man, and has all believers as joint-heirs with Him. In Colossians 1 we get Him as Creator, as Son of God, as Son of Man, and as Redeemer (the fourth telling us His title—Redeemer—that which has given Him a right over everything). All things are to be reconciled by Him; I do not say justified, because the things had not sinned; but they were all defiled; and, having reconciled all things, He takes us as joint-heirs. Just as Eve was not one of the different animals that Adam gave names to, neither was she lord as Adam, nor was she that over which he was lord; but she was a help-meet or companion with him over the things. And it is under the fourth title, though all remain united in His Person, that He brings in creation unto undefiled blessedness. It never can fail, and we know the redemption already: “you hath he reconciled”; the redemption is accomplished, though the results are not yet produced, as it is said, “that we might be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.”

Then he tells us that the same mind is to be in us as was in Christ. He had “a body prepared,” or “ears dug,” as it is in Psalm 40: 6. He had taken the place of a servant as man. He comes, the fulness of the Godhead, in this body, and

exhibits perfect obedience in it; and God has exalted Him to His right hand. He has gone before. We are not there yet; we are left to walk like Him here. It is a blessed thing to see the place He has taken: His path coming always down, and that to be the mind in us. So God says, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" too; that is, infernal things will have to own His title in glory. In that character, that He is exalted, they will have to bow to Him.

The first Adam did not become head of a race till he had sinned; and Christ did not become Head of a new race till He had accomplished redemption, and was Head of righteousness. As man entered Paradise, so He entered the world; each began a race. Sin complete, and the race ended on the one hand; and righteousness complete, and the race begun on the other.

When we talk of coming down, we mean the getting rid of pride in us. It is just the thing the Christian learns, and just the thing the flesh dislikes. Moses killed the Egyptian through the remains of court pride. Satan says, I cannot allow this; you must take the place out and out, or you cannot have it. The world's weapons will not do to fight God's battles with; Moses runs away, and is forty years keeping sheep instead of fighting. Then when God sends him, he cannot go; the extreme of one side and the extreme of the other. Our part in detail is always to wait till God puts us up higher, like the man who took the low place, to whom it was said, "Go up higher." If we are content with the low place, we shall miss ten thousand rebuffs we should otherwise have.

Now there comes a passage which often troubles people, but needlessly, as we shall see. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." The mistake people make is putting God's working and our working in contrast. It is not so. The contrast is between Paul and themselves. In losing Paul they had not lost God, who was working. He says, Do it, now that I am absent, for yourselves. Paul had been doing it for them. He had met the wiles of Satan for them in

apostolic blessing; his spirit of wisdom had told them what to do. Now he says, My absence does not alter the present power of grace; God works in you Himself. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." They were now to meet the enemy without Paul in the front to lead them on. Never mind, he says: "work out your own salvation." I go always down, Himself working in me.

Chapter 2 is the pattern of Christ's lowly walk, the Lord coming down, and always so to the end; chapter 3 is the power and energy of life with Christ, and glory its object. The effect is to produce exactly the character of Christ: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." That is exactly the description of Christ Himself. Take every member of that sentence, and you will see it is Christ. He was all that, and that is just what you are to be. How completely self is put down, God graciously working in us; and the effect is exactly what Christ was—constant self humiliation—and so blameless and harmless, the Son of God without rebuke, the expression of divine grace when there was no will or human exaltation, but the contrary. We see the perfect beauty and blessedness of it. It is not the energy, as in the next chapter; it is the character of the obedience. Wherever the path of obedience led He went. Having taken the form of a servant, His perfection was to obey.

Look what the effect was produced on a creature doing his own will as Adam. What an awful spectacle for angels—the ruin and destruction of God's glory in the world! But, when we had destroyed God's glory, Christ comes, and God is a debtor to man for His glory—not to us, I need not say—just as He had been a debtor to man for His dishonour; for by the cross God was glorified in His very nature. Christ comes, and we see what sin was—deliberate enmity against God's goodness, but all that God is was glorified; His majesty maintained, and all His truth comes out; His righteousness against sin; His perfect love. But

the putting away of our sins was a small part of the glory of the cross; it is the foundation of eternal glory and blessedness.

Not only does Christ take the form of a servant, but He will never give it up. As never the place of man will be given up, so He will never give up its true place before God. He took upon Him the form of a man, and served His time on earth, as we have in the figure of the Hebrew servant in Exodus 21, and could have gone out free as man—could have had twelve legions of angels to deliver Him. But He did not. The ear of the servant was bored with an awl to the door when he would not go out free, because he loved his master, his wife, and his children, and he became a servant for ever. And that is what Christ is. In John 13, when the blessed Lord was going to glory, we should have said, there is an end of service. It is not so. He gets up from where He was sitting among them as a companion, He gets up and washes their feet; and that is what He is doing now. He says, I cannot stay with you here, but I will not give you up; you must now have part with Me where I am going. If I do not make you clean enough for heaven, you cannot have part with Me there. So this He does by keeping our feet clean. In Luke 12 we learn that He still continues the service in glory—"He shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." There we get His service in glory. It is His glory in love, though in the form of service. Not only heaven's table for us, but Christ Himself ministering it to us. He never gives up the service. Selfishness likes to be served, but love likes to serve; so Christ never gives up the service, for He never gives up the love. It is His love expressed in ministering that makes everything doubly blessed to us.

When I am brought to God in the spirit of my mind, I can go down like Christ.

Working out your own salvation with fear and trembling is not justification, and our place with God. Salvation in Philippians is always the final result in glory. What was the effect of redemption on Israel? Not to put them in Canaan, but to make them enter on a road through the wilderness. And where were they to get food? and were

there not enemies in the way, too? I am to make good my way, maintaining God's name and character, and **the devil is trying to hinder me; this is why there is fear and trembling**. An Israelite in the wilderness never doubted as to whether he were in Egypt or not. If I find a doubting Christian, he does not yet know that he is redeemed. An Israelite might not gather manna, and would have nothing to eat that day; but he had no thought of being in Egypt. It was only eleven days' journey from Egypt to Canaan, as we get in Deuteronomy 1; but they were forty years journeying before they got to the plains of Moab, except the year they were at Sinai, for they had no courage or faith to take hold.

And so Satan seeks to hinder now. You will not get to your homes to-night without the devil trying to take away the blessing you may have got here. The devil will try to get up pride in you, and thus not let you shew out the character of Christ. If you knew that you were charged to carry this character of Christ through the world, and that Satan was trying to hinder you, you would count it a very serious thing. So Peter says, "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." Satan is trying to dirty your feet, or to get you to dishonour Christ in the most awful way. I am in conflict with Satan, the world, and self, but I am in perfect peace with God. It is totally false to confound the working out our salvation with our relationship with God. This is all settled, and my confidence in God enables me to go on working.

Beloved brethren, how far are we doing this? Redemption is complete. How far are our souls making nothing of ourselves, and looking to manifest what Christ was here? It flows out naturally if I am full of Christ. I am not saying I must do this or that like Christ, though that sometimes too; but "he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

You will find the spirit of this graciousness and considerateness running all through the chapter in its details; it all comes out most beautifully.

I would make one remark more: that it is exceedingly blessed to see all this going on when the church was already sinking away into ruin. "All seek their own," he says in this very epistle, and that already. How little we realise its real state when we speak of the primitive church! There it is, all seeking their own; and it was a great deal worse after. I refer to it as a matter of comfort, for he exhorts them to this path in spite of the condition around; as it was when Elijah went up to heaven without dying, at the very time when he could find none but himself who had not bowed the knee to Baal, though God knew where to find them. There were brighter things, too, in David than there ever were in Solomon, who goes to Gibeon (where the ark was not), to sacrifice (2 Chron. 1), not to teach to sing before the ark on Sion "His mercy endureth for ever," 1 Chron. 16. Solomon had never a heart which God could string to play such tunes about Christ as He did in David.

We are told never to be discouraged; to rejoice in all good. If we find that all seek their own, we must only be the more like Christ ourselves. It is a comfort that the Head cannot fail though the members do; you cannot put me in a place in which Christ is not sufficient in full power and grace. All we want is to find ourselves lowly at His feet, He the counsellor of our hearts. If we are with God in light we know our own nothingness; and if all seek their own, His grace and blessedness come out the more.

The Lord give us to look to Him as our life and strength.

Philippians 3:1-14

We saw the apostle in the last chapter bringing our hearts in contact with the Lord Jesus, giving up His divine glory on high, taking the form of a servant, and going down; and then as Man highly exalted. That is exactly what we are to do; we are to have the same mind.

He had closed then, in the last chapter, the state and condition of soul we are to be in, and he now looks before—onward to the glory. The things before will keep the soul from being hindered—Christ set before the soul so as to take complete possession of it. It is not the character of graciousness in the life here, and

considerateness for others, as in the last chapter, which looked at Christ emptying Himself of glory and humbling Himself; but the energy of divine life which presses forward to the goal. Sometimes we see a want of energy where there is loveliness of character; or a great deal of energy, on the other hand, when there is a want of softness and considerateness for others. But in the things of God you must get the whole that any part may be right. Satan imitates part, but you never get the whole in what he imitates. When you get both—when Christ is everything, it delivers from selfishness, and shews itself in seeking the good of others; but it will not give way when giving up Christ is in question (I do not mean giving Him up as to the soul's salvation, but in our path here). So the apostle Peter says, "add to brotherly kindness charity," for if God is not brought in, we have no power to walk according to Him in graciousness. Christ has gone up and is everything to us; He is before us as an object, and we cannot give Him up to please the flesh; but we can look for power to press on.

He then gives the starting-point in rejoicing in the Lord. "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, rejoice." **The effect of the ending of self is that I rejoice.** Nothing separates from the love, we know; but there is danger when we are in the enjoyment of present blessing; we are apt to rest in the blessing, and not feel dependent on the Blessor. David said, "I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." When his mountain was gone, he found he had been trusting in his mountain, and not in the Lord. When he says, "The Lord is my Shepherd," there was no being moved, for he was resting in the Lord Himself. If the heart is emptied of self, it does rest in the Lord; but the heart is so treacherous that a person experiencing great joy as a Christian often gets a fall after it, because of having got away from the place of dependence. He is restored again, we know, as in that Psalm: "He restoreth my soul."

Here Paul was just going to be tried for his life. He had been in prison four years (two of them chained to heathen soldiers), and he says he knew how to be full and to be

hungry, how to abound and to suffer need. Pains and sorrows, and joys and comforts—he had gone through all; and he was not discouraged as a man might be who was obliged to be with brutal uncultivated men, and in constant suffering chained to a soldier, and four years in prison. And that was not all; he might have said, I am in prison and cannot do the Lord's work. No, he is with the Lord, and he says, all will "turn to my salvation." Even when Christ was preached of contention, he could say, "I herein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." When we are weaned from everything, we are cast on the Lord, and able to rejoice in the Lord, and that is when He leads us.

But what an object, what an energy-producing object, there was in the Lord before him! He looks at everything beyond the wilderness—he a traveller across it, and on the way, always rejoicing in the Lord. Whether he was preaching in public, or quietly in his lodging receiving those who came in, he was rejoicing. It is a great setting aside of self to be always rejoicing in the Lord. He had hoped to go on into Spain after being somewhat filled with the saints' company; but there was now no more about Spain, or being filled with their company either, yet he was still rejoicing. You can never get inside the defences of the one whose joy is in the Lord. "Nay, in all these things," he says, "we are more than conquerors." All these things are creatures—"angels, principalities, and powers"; but He dwells in us; He is near the heart, and that is the great secret. We get Christ between us and the troubles, we understand how unbelief hinders, but this is the secret that makes everything work for good. The love of God is reckoned upon; His love is shed abroad in the heart. The great starting-point is, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

We see, too, the simplicity of looking to Christ. The religion of **descent**, of **ordinances**, and of **works**—the moment I get these three, morally speaking, I get **a Jew**. It was all works, ordinances, and descent. I could boast of all this just the same if Christ had not come. But where does it all end? "Beware of dogs." "Dogs" is a name for a perfectly shameless thing.

I must get the conscience with God, and Christ from God, or I have got nothing. A Jew could bow his head like a bulrush and do all that without his soul being with God, and therefore God puts perfect contempt upon it all. He says, "My son, give me thy heart." "The cattle upon a thousand hills" are Mine. "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee." It is no use your bringing offerings: I want you, not your offerings. Cain had much more trouble in tilling the ground than Abel had about the lamb; but Cain's conscience had never been with God, nor seen the ruin that had come in; we see the hardness of his heart as to sin, and his ignorance as to the holiness of God. He brings what was the sign of the curse—what he had got by the sweat of his face. Abel brought a lamb, and was accepted. If we have got the real knowledge of the work of atonement and acceptance in Him, we are like Abel. The testimony as to righteousness refers to the person of Abel. What it was founded on was his offering, which was a type of Christ. God cannot refuse me when I present Christ to Him; He accepts me according to the pass I bring. I cannot think of going through a process to make my soul up in some way. In coming to God I must come in God's way, which is Christ and nothing else; and with my own conscience, not with ordinances, which are all outward things.

It is remarkable the way in which he treats the subject in this chapter. It is not the conscience with sin on it, but the worthlessness of all ordinances; so he calls it the "concision." Have your hearts circumcised—that is the true ordinance. "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit"; even as Jeremiah says, "Circumcise your hearts." It must be the flesh totally put down. The flesh has a religion as well as lusts; but the flesh must have a religion that will not kill the flesh. Satisfying the flesh in mortifying the body—a voluntary humility, not sparing the body—that is easy work; but it is not easy work to be done with the flesh.

Suppose I could say, "A Hebrew of the Hebrews," "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless," perfectly religious—who would be accredited by that? Paul; not God or Christ. It is not worth a farthing,

this righteousness. It is giving me a good place. It is "I" all the while, not Christ. And it is in this that it is detected—the moment it accredits the flesh. It may be costly and painful, it may be things by which I punish myself, but it is utterly worthless. I have seen a person irritated to the last degree when told it was not worth anything.

It is striking, the way in which Paul takes it up. It is not as sin, but as something perfectly **worthless**—legal righteousness, and the true religion as man can see it. "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and after the strictest sect he lived a Pharisee; that was gain to him. Then he says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." **There was no question of sin; when he speaks of righteousness, it is not as meeting sins, but as contrasted with righteousness according to the law.** We can always detect it; all it does is to accredit self—that is the mischief and the evil; for who would have filthy rags (that is what our righteousnesses are called) when he could have Christ for his righteousness? He had such a perception of the excellency of what Christ is in God's sight—what God delights in—that he says, I am not going to keep this wretched righteousness, or add it to that which is of God. The deceitful lusts are bad enough, but this religious flesh is worse. It was not real righteousness; it was self puffed up, not self judged; it was self eked out, and painted over. Now he wants to get rid of self, and have Christ instead of it.

That is the place, and now he unfolds it. Remark, it is not when I was converted I counted all things loss. We find, when a person is converted, Christ is everything; the world is a vain show—vanity, nothing. It has passed from the mind, and things unseen fill the heart. But afterwards as the man goes on with his duties and intercourse with his friends, though Christ is still precious, he does not continue to count all things loss; often it is only that he counted. But Paul says, "I do count," not did. It is a great thing to be able to say it. Christ should hold always such a

place as He did when salvation was first revealed to our hearts.

Allow me to add a thing which comes into my mind. Of course if a man has not Christ at the bottom, he is no Christian at all; but I mean even where Christ is in a man, and you may find him walking blamelessly, yet, if you speak to him of Christ, there is not an echo in his heart, though his life goes on smoothly. Christ at the bottom, and a fair Christian walk at the top, and, between these two, a hundred and fifty things that Christ has nothing to do with at all. His life is practically passed without Christ. This will not do. It is the terrible levity of the heart that goes on without Christ, until it becomes the highway of whatever the world pours into it.

He now tells us what is the power for this. He wants to win Christ, and it looks like a terrible sacrifice to give up everything for this. But it is just like a baby with a plaything. Try to take the plaything from it, it will hold it the faster; put a prettier before it, and it will let the other drop. He counted everything loss and dung; the things were gone. I shall have temptations, I know; but nine-tenths of the temptations that beset and hinder would not exist if Christ had His place. Things would not tempt and beset us, as gold, and silver, and pretty things, if "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus" had its place in the heart; that kind of conflict would be gone. We should then know the snares of Satan, and suffer for others; it would not be the struggle to keep my own head above water, but to keep others from being drowned.

Christ having got this place, other things have lost their value. The eye is single, and the whole body is full of light. He had suffered the loss of all things; but he says, "I do count them but dung." He was looking at Christ as such a blessed object that everything was given up for Him. And he kept this place for Him, so that he goes on to win Christ. He had not got Christ yet, but Christ had got hold of him; and he was running the race to get there, and looking at the end of the journey. No matter what the road is; it may be rough, but I am looking to the end.

There are these **two things** here; **first**, that I may win Christ; and **second**, that I may not have my own righteousness. A man with a threadbare coat, if he gets a right good one, is ashamed of the old one. Paul would not thank you for the kind of righteousness he had before. I cannot have my own and God's; I would not have my own if I could. This is blessedly brought out in 1 Corinthians 1: "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." What we are in life as of God, Christ is of God towards me.

He then goes to the next thing, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection."

The first thing was winning Christ; the second, knowing Christ. There is the victory over the whole power of evil—death, and everything else. I want to know Him—His perfect love and life; to have Him as the object before the soul-occupying the soul, and mind, and heart, and so grow up into Him; and to know the power of His resurrection, for then the whole power of Satan was set aside. He had spoken of the righteousness as that which he sought in Christ, not in himself and the law; and now he wanted to know the power of the life expressed in the resurrection of Christ. When he has known Christ as a Person, and victory over death, he can take up the service of love as Christ did, and can know "the fellowship of his sufferings." How different from fearing, and dreading, and creeping on as the apostles did when told of His death, in Mark 10! "They were amazed, and as they followed, they were afraid," instead of rejoicing because death was before them. But, if I know the power of resurrection, death is behind me, all its power is broken. So, when He rose, He said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"; "Preach the gospel to every creature"; "Be not afraid of them that kill the body," He had said before: they killed His body.

When I have got the power of resurrection I can serve in love. Paul was looking death in the face, and not speaking lightly. Satan says, You want to follow Christ? Yes. There is death in your way. Very well; I shall be all the more like Christ for going through it.

“The fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” It should be rather “the resurrection from among the dead.” Paul so came into this, that he uses words Christ Himself might use: “I endure all things for the elect’s sake.” It was all of grace—a totally new place—all pretension to righteousness gone, and what I am as man too, and Christ substituted as righteousness for me. And then Himself—to know Him. That is where progress goes on to; the affections are now engaged. When I see suffering before me, I get the power of His resurrection, and then the privilege of the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul had a large share of this; we have a little. He says, “If by any means I might attain”; that is, Cost what it will, if death is on the road, all right: I shall arrive at what He did—resurrection from among the dead. *Resurrection* here in Philippians 3: 11, is a special word in the Greek, and never even found but here in the New Testament. When we look at the resurrection from the dead, we find it to be a matter of all possible importance. Christ was the first-fruits, not of the wicked dead, of course. What was Christ’s resurrection? God raised him from the dead, because His delight was in Him, because of His perfect righteousness and glorifying Him. And it is the same with us. **Resurrection is the expression of God’s satisfaction in those raised; it is His seal on Christ’s work.** Christ was the Son He delighted in, and now it is the same with us because of Christ. In Him it was His own perfectness; with us it is because of Him. In power He comes in to take His own out, while the rest are left behind.

“From among,” etc.—in that lies the whole force of the expression. So at the transfiguration He charged them not to speak of it “till the Son of man were risen from the dead”; they questioned among themselves “what the rising from the dead should mean.” What astonished them? It was “the rising from among the dead.” It was this very thing. God intervened in power, and raised Him up, and set Him at His own right hand; and when the time is come, He will raise His saints too. It is an immense act of divine power, for divine righteousness is there. In 1 Corinthians

15 there is no reference but to saints; it is not a general resurrection, for the wicked are not raised in glory. **I do not know anything that has done more harm to the church than the notion of a general resurrection.** If all are raised together, the question of righteousness is not settled; but it is, "if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." The whole character, and nature, and meaning, and purpose of this resurrection is entirely distinct. "From among" is the expression of divine delight in the person raised, and we are all raised because of it; else there would be no sense in the expression "attained."

He says, "if by any means"—if it cost me my life—it is all nothing. "That I may win Christ" is the first thing. But, in winning Him at the close of the race, it is also as a present thing "that I may know him." It has been asked whether this refers to the present effect, or to the future glory? I say **it is present effect by future glory.**

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling." The high calling is the calling above. We see the immediate connection of the object with the present effect. **He wanted to be like Christ now, not only when he should be dead in his grave and his spirit in paradise.** If he were to die, he would be then like Him; but that was not what he was looking for, namely, to be conformed to the image of the Son of God in glory. This he would be of course, but this I never shall be till Christ come and raise the dead; this I wait for. I am conscious of never attaining, but I wait for it, and every day I am more like Him, suffering in the power of the love in which He served the Father; and there is a continual growing likeness to Christ inwardly from looking at Him in the glory. The only thing I care for is to be like Him in glory, and with Him.

The whole of Paul's life was founded on that, and completely formed by that. The Son of God was forming his soul day by day, and he was always running towards Him, and never doing anything else. It was not merely as an apostle that he entered into the fellowship of His sufferings, and conformity to His death, but **every Christian ought to be doing the same.** A person may say

he has forgiveness of sins, but I say, What is governing your heart now? Is your eye resting on Christ in glory? Is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus so before your soul as to govern everything else, and make you count everything loss that is in the way? Is that where you are? Has this excellent knowledge put out all other things? not only an outwardly blameless walk, and able to say you love Christ; but has the thought of Christ in glory put out all other things? If it were so, you would not be governed by everyday nothings.

If a labouring man has a family, he does not forget the affections of his children because of his work. On the contrary, when his labour is done, his tools are thrown down, and he returns home with all the more joy because he has been absent from it. His labour did not hinder or enfeeble the affections of his heart.

To be in our daily occupations as to Christ, we have also to watch against another danger; when there are not other objects, there are distractions. We must watch the distractions as well as the objects, and have habits of jealousy of heart for Christ, else there is immediate weakness. And then when we go into God's presence, instead of rejoicing in the Lord, conscience has to be talked to. It is sad indeed when the walk in the world has been such, that, on going back to Christ, we find He had not been thought of in it.

Could you say, as Paul to Agrippa, Would to God you were (not almost, but) altogether such as I am? Are you happy enough to say that? Can you say, I am so rejoicing in Christ, and see such excellency in the knowledge of Him, that I would to God you were like me? What we have to look for in hearts is, not I have counted, but "I do count." Do your hearts count, as a present thing, all things loss? Two things we have to watch against, having another object, and, what is even more subtle, distractions.

The Lord give us to have our eyes so anointed with eye-salve, so to see Him, as to detach our hearts from other things; to have no other object than Himself before them. Perhaps we shall have the cross to take up; but mark, then it is not merely suffering, nor always exactly for Him

either, but it is always with Him. The Lord give us (for we have to pass through a place where people do not care about Christ) to have the eye thus fixed on Him, having Him as a sanctuary, as the power and energy which carries us through. The Lord give us—and it is in His heart to give us—to say, “This one thing I do.” The Lord give us truth of heart, and diligence of heart too.

Philippians 3:15-21; 4:1-7

We were seeing, beloved brethren, the way in which Christ being before the eye gives earnestness of purpose in running towards the glory. Christ had laid hold on Paul for it, and he wanted to lay hold on Christ in glory. We were seeing too that this epistle looks at the Christian as travelling across the wilderness with everything at the end, but remember this, that, all through, the power of Christ’s resurrection being in him, he had already the power in life, and wanted it in glory; and the practical effect was to make him run as a person who had only the glory in view. One single object—winning Him—and being raised up himself into the glory.

That is what we are predestinated to—”to be conformed to the image of his Son”; not looking forward to being like Him when our bodies are in the grave and we in Paradise. True, “when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”; “but our conversation” is now “in heaven”; our citizenship, though I do not much like the word. **It means all our living relationships**; as we say, He is an Englishman; that is what distinguishes him. What distinguishes us is, we are of heaven. So he says, “this one thing I do,” running towards the place; it has determined my whole life; “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling.” The high calling means the calling above. We can have no notion of perfection but as in that glory.

The moment I have seen Christ come down, obedient to death for me, there is nothing too great to expect as the answer to it, for all is the fruit of the travail of His soul.

The “earnest of his love” is nowhere in Scripture; it has been taken, I think, out of a hymn. The earnest of the glory we have; “the love of God is shed abroad in our

hearts.” Paul felt the power of the glory on his spirit; and that is how we are to run, but all Christians do not know it. If a man is a Christian at all he must know the cross as that through which he is redeemed; but he may not know that he is going to be with Christ in glory. The “little children” know that their sins are forgiven. This is the common knowledge of all. And the children know the Father—have the Spirit of adoption. But the perfect in Christ, as they are here called, know the evil of their own hearts far better, and at the same time see the perfect love of God in giving Christ on the cross—love come down to the sinner in his sins. They see not only that they are forgiven, but that we are all done with as children of Adam. The little children have not that. They do not know that they are entirely set aside as to their Adam nature. The old nature is dead to faith, and “when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory”; and faith has got the place now, “Herein is love with us made perfect,” “because as he is, so are we in this world.” There is the man perfect.

He says, “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.” He may be at the beginning, and you farther on; if so, you ought only to shew him the more grace; however, Christ has laid hold on him, and forgiven him his sins, and he will yet know another thing, even that he has died with Christ—that not only sins are forgiven, but that sin is put away by faith—that he himself is put away—that self which troubled him a great deal more than his sins. They are to be likeminded, as those who know that they are associated with the last Adam. Even if this is not seen by all, they are yet to go thoroughly together; God will reveal it to the others.

He then turns to **the contrast**, and, in doing so, puts himself forward in a remarkable way as their example. There are those whose “conversation is in heaven,” and there are those who “mind earthly things”; the end of the latter is destruction; they are contrary to Christianity. It is now not a question of not seeing clearly, but of having the mind on earthly things. That is not Christ in glory; I cannot mind earthly things and Christ too. “The friendship

of the world is enmity with God.” “All that is in the world is not of the Father.” The children are of the Father. When I was first awakened, I was astonished to find so much about the world in God’s word; but I soon saw, when I had to do with Christians, how it dragged them back, always soliciting their hearts.

He says those who mind earthly things are the enemies of the cross of Christ. What was the cross? It had judged all this. I find the Son of God—the spring, and root, and plant, for all glory to grow on. The cross was all He got in this world. And what is the world? The world would not have Christ on any terms; so I have done with it. “The world seeth me no more”; the Holy Ghost is not come to be seen; “whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” That is how we know the Holy Ghost.

Evil and good came to an issue at the cross. It was the turning-point; it was where the two met. And now the whole question is, Am I with the world that turned Christ out, or with Christ whom the world turned out? There is nothing like the cross. It is both the righteousness of God against sin, and the righteousness of God in pardoning sin. It is the end of the world of judgment, and the beginning of the world of life. It is the work that put away sin, and yet it is the greatest sin that ever was committed. The more we think of it, the more we see it is the turning-point of everything. So, if a person follows the world, he is an enemy of the cross of Christ. As Christians we have to look into it, how far this vain show puts a spider film over our hearts, so as to hinder us from seeing. If I take the glory of the world that crucified Christ, I am glorying in my shame. Where is a man at home? In his Father’s house, not in the dreary desert he has to cross in going there.

The meekness of the path we saw in chapter 2; here we have the power and energy that delivers from the world that would hinder our being like Him.

“Who shall change our vile body”—the body of our humiliation, not vile morally. I have Adam’s body now, I

shall have Christ's then. All our living associations are where He is. As Saviour He will come and accomplish all in changing our body, and conforming it to His glorious body. The price has been paid, but the final deliverance of what has been paid for is not yet come. "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God," but we have not yet got it. We are waiting till He come, to get it.

Ah! beloved brethren, if our hearts really felt that God is going to make us like Christ, if we practically believed that He is going to bring us as brethren to be with and like Christ—well, we should have altogether another thought about the world, we should be "perfect" then, pressing towards the mark.

If I die meanwhile, I am always confident. I do not want to die; I want mortality to be swallowed up of life; but if death come, it does not touch my confidence; "absent from the body, present with the Lord."

He first speaks of the hope; that is what I want. Then he looks at the two things that are man's portion: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." As to death, it is gain to me, for to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. But what about the judgment? It is a solemn thing. It is "the terror of the Lord." I think of the poor things not converted, and I "persuade men." It makes him think not of himself but of other people, though he says, "we must all appear"—that is, be manifested—"before the judgment-seat of Christ." We persuade men, and are made manifest to God. The day of judgment had its effect on him; it made him feel now the effect of the presence of God, as he will do in the day of judgment. It keeps my conscience awake and alive; it is a sanctifying power, not a terrifying one. Divine power will take us; as Adam had Eve presented to him, Christ, being God, presents His Eve—His church—to Himself, as last Adam.

Persons have asked if this is present or future—"that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection." It is the present power of looking at it objectively. "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." It is the present effect of having the eye fixed on

Him and waiting for Him. Final redemption will come, and make good, as to the body, what is true now of the soul. He will make us like Him in the Father's house; and, what I feel is so blessed, He will have us there without even the need of a conscience. Here I must always have my conscience on the *qui vive*; if not, I am at once caught in a snare of Satan. There I shall not want it, where all around will be blessedness. We shall have the Holy Ghost then too, and His whole power spent in enabling us to enjoy the glory. Now "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," but much of the power is spent in making the ship go.

As a matter of fact, a number of us have cares, and trials, and temptations. God has thought of all these; He has counted the very hairs of our heads, and given us something that takes us out of them all. He thinks of the weather for us even: "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." Nay, even a sparrow falls not to the ground without your Father. God thinks of everything, and gives us complete superiority over everything.

Chapter 4

It is blessed to see that the apostle goes from the most exalted thoughts of the revelation of God to the commonest things a saint has to pass through. From things so exalted he turns to two women who were not getting on well together. So it is to-day. There is no forgetfulness in grace. It takes up to the third heaven, but goes down to the smallest things. Even when a runaway slave is in question, the delicacy with which Paul deals with it has been admired in all ages.

What was Christ's comfort on the cross? He could not tell the poor thief that he was going to paradise without telling him that He was going there too: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." So Paul, when thinking of the women who laboured with him, says, "whose names are in the book of life." God being there, there were divine affections; we are put in the place of divine affections.

There is nothing I feel more in going out to visit, than the desire that Christ should be so there, that the thing should come out that would come out of Christ—not my own

thoughts. We do not know half how blessed it is to have the mind of Christ; but the mind of Christ was to go down to the cross.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway.” Who was a fit person to say that? The man who had been in the third heaven? No. The man a prisoner at Rome. That was rejoicing always; as we have in the Psalms, “I will bless the Lord at all times.” When I get the Lord as the object of my heart, there is more of heaven in the prison than out of it. It is not the green pastures and waters of quietness that make him glad, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” not the green pastures, though green pastures are very nice. And even if I wander from them, it is “He restoreth my soul.” And if death is in the way, I am not afraid, for “Thou art with me.” And though there are dreadful enemies, there is a table spread in their presence. Now he says, “My cup runneth over.” He carries him through all the difficulties and trials of his own feebleness. Ah! he says, “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

The man who trusted in the Lord, the more trouble he was in, the more he proved that all was right. Paul says, I know Him free, and I know Him in prison. He was sufficient when he was in want, and sufficient when he abounded. So he says, “Rejoice in the Lord alway.”

What could they do with such a man? If they kill him, they only send him to heaven; if they let him live, he is all devoted to lead people to the Christ they would destroy.

It is more difficult to rejoice in the Lord in prosperity than in trials, for trials cast us on the Lord. There is more danger for us when there are no trials. But delight in the Lord delivers us altogether from the power of present things. We are not aware, until they are taken away, how much the most spiritual of us lean on props. I mean we lean on things around us. But if we are rejoicing in the Lord alway, that strength can never be taken away, nor can we lose the joy of it.

“Let your moderation be known unto all men.” Do you think people will think your conversation is in heaven if you are eager about things of earth? They will only think

so if there is the testimony that the heart does not stick up for itself. "The Lord is at hand." All will be set right soon. If you pass on in meekness, and subduedness, and unresistingness, how it acts in keeping the heart and affections right; and the world can see when the mind and spirit is not set on it. So he says, let it be "known unto all men."

"Be careful for nothing." I have found that word so often a thorough comfort. Even if it be a great trial, still "be careful for nothing." Oh! you say, it is not my petty circumstances—it is a question of saints going wrong. Well, "be careful for nothing." It is not that you are careless, but you are trying to carry the burden, and so you are racking your heart with it. How often a burden possesses a person's mind, and when he tries in vain to cast it off, it comes back and worries him! But "be careful for nothing" is a command, and it is blessed to have such a command.

What shall I do then? Go to God. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Then in the midst of all the care you can give thanks. And we see the exceeding grace of God in this. It is not that you are to wait till you find out if what you want is the will of God. No. "Let your requests be made known." Have you a burden on your heart? Now go with your request to God. He does not say that you will get it. Paul, when he prayed, had for answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." But peace will keep your heart and mind—not you will keep this peace. Is He ever troubled by the little things that trouble us? Do they shake His throne? He thinks of us, we know, but He is not troubled; and the peace that is in God's heart is to keep ours. I go and carry it all to Him, and I find Him all quiet about it. It is all settled. He knows quite well what He is going to do. I have laid the burden on the throne that never shakes, with the perfect certainty that God takes an interest in me, and the peace He is in keeps my heart, and I can thank Him even before the trouble has passed. I can say, Thank God, He takes an interest in me. It is a blessed thing that I can have this peace, and thus go and make my request—

perhaps a very foolish one—and, instead of brooding over trials, that I can be with God about them.

It is sweet to me to see that, while He carries us up to heaven, He comes down and occupies Himself with everything of ours here. While our affections are occupied with heavenly things, we can trust God for earthly things. He comes down to everything. As Paul says, “without were fightings, within were fears. Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us.” It was worth being cast down to get that kind of comfort. Is He a God afar off, and not a God nigh at hand? He does not give us to see before us, for then the heart would not be exercised; but, though we see not Him, He sees us, and comes down to give us all that kind of comfort in the trouble.

Philippians 4:8-23

The first two verses I have read are the last of the exhortation in this epistle.

We have already seen the way in which, in entire superiority to all circumstances, the Christian is to go on. All through the epistle that character of the power of the Spirit of God is brought out. In verse 8 we get the effect of what we were speaking of last time: “Rejoice in the Lord always”; “let your moderation be known unto all men”; “be careful for nothing; 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.” The heart is set free, for the peace of God, which is immutable, keeps the heart and mind. There is nothing new or strange to God. He is always in peace, working all things after the counsel of His own will. It is thus that the heart is to be at rest, and then it is free to be occupied with what is lovely and blessed.

It is a great thing for the Christian to have the habit of living in what is good in this world, where we necessarily have to do with what is evil. We were evil ourselves once, and nothing else was in heart, thoughts, and mind; and there is still **evil not only in the world but in our hearts,** and we have to **judge it where it is allowed. But it will not do to be always occupied with it. It defiles even when we**

judge it; just as when the man had to do with the ashes of the red heifer in Numbers 19; he was really doing a service in gathering them up, and laying them up without the camp, yet he was unclean until even, and the same as to him who applied them. **It is soiling to our minds, even to be judging evil.** There is in some hearts a tendency to be busy about evil, but it will not do to live in. Of course I am not now speaking of living in it actually, but of even in thought judging it.

It is a great thing to have the heart toned and tuned to take delight in the things God delights in. Even in the sense of judging evil as evil, it is not happy. I am to be living now as with God in heaven, and has God to be judging evil in heaven? We know He has not; and it is a great thing for our souls to be above with the Lord, not only doing the things that please Him, but being also in the state of mind in which He can delight. Take one day only and ask yourself, has your mind been living in the things that are lovely and of good report? It is that the apostle speaks of here. Is it the habit of your mind to be dwelling on what is good? Evil forces itself on us in these days, but it will not do to be dwelling on it. It weakens the mind; the mind gets no strength from thinking of it. It may awaken disgust where the mind is in a spiritual state, but even judging it, we are not doing it rightly unless the heart is dwelling on what is good. We might be bringing down fire from heaven, when Christ would merely go to another village.

He walked in the full power of communion in what was good in the midst of evil, though He had to do with it; He had to say, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees"; and we may have to do with it too, but it is never done rightly unless we are living in what is good. There would never be softness, and by this I do not mean softness towards evil—we have to judge that peremptorily—but there would be no gracious softness. Paul had to say, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." There is no softness here: but still even this comes out in love. Supposing we have to judge evil, we have to do it in the power of the good that is in us. Here is the path in which our souls have to walk: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, 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.” The Lord give us, beloved brethren, to remember them. God may have to judge, but He dwells in what is good.

We then get—and what a blessed thing it is for a man to be able to say it—”Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do.” Mark here, that is the way of having the God of peace with us. When our cares are cast on God, he says, “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”; but this is more. Paul stood in a special or peculiar place, filled by the Spirit of God, though the chief of sinners, as he says, yet “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus”: “death worketh in us—life in you.” It was a great deal to say. He had to have a thorn in the flesh to enable him to carry it out; it was not that his flesh was naturally any better than yours. He did not only say, I am dead, but he carried about the death in the flesh, so that it did not stir. He was a chosen vessel, we know, and it was through the grace and power of Christ that he did it. But he was doing it, and so, as we remarked in beginning, there is never sin mentioned in this epistle, because it is the proper experience of Christian life; doctrine is scarcely alluded to either. Paul speaks throughout in the consciousness of his experience.

If I look to walk after Christ, I must reckon myself dead. I never say I must die, because this would be to suppose the flesh there working; of course it is there, but I say it is dead. I quite understand a person passing through a state by which he learns what flesh is, and such processes are more or less long. But when brought thoroughly down to say, “In me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing,” then God can say, Reckon yourself dead; do not let sin have dominion over you. **The spring from which all power comes is that you have died.** That is the fundamental truth as to deliverance. Deliverance comes when by the power of the Spirit of God we reckon ourselves dead. It is not so but to faith. Christ is there in power, and I reckon myself dead, and then I can deal in power.

“This is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” But is that all? No. For supposing life is there, and that the old nature is still alive, there is nothing but conflict between the two, and, unless I have the power of the Spirit of God, no settled freedom from sin; and supposing I have, still there is conflict. Only if I am dead really, my deliverance from the working of the flesh is fully realised. The apostle says, in the power and being of this life, I am dead; and when he comes to carry it out, it is “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” I have received Christ as righteousness before God, and as life in me; and I treat the old thing as dead. It is not only that I have life, but I have died, so it is not an even chance between the two, which shall have the upper hand. It is the way till I am brought to the discovery that there is no good in the flesh, and that I have died with Christ. Then I learn that **not only I have done bad things, but that the tree itself is bad**, and that Christ, who is our life, has died to sin, as well as for sins; and, when I reckon the old thing dead, I find liberty.

I do not say forgiveness, but deliverance. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free.” Of course I may fail, and may be brought under the power of sin for a moment, but I am not a debtor to it any more. How has He condemned the flesh? In death. Then I am free—in the fact of life treating the old thing as dead. We are always to manifest this life of Jesus. Keeping in faith this dying of Christ, I have got the cross for the flesh. The apostle says, The death of Christ works in me, old Paul, and so nothing but the life of Christ flows out for you; and he says, Go you and do like me; “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.” He Himself will be then present with you.

What a wonderful thing it is, beloved brethren! The life of Christ given—the flesh reckoned dead—and we walking accordingly. Is God then going to keep Himself separate from you? No. “The God of peace shall be with you.”

It is wonderful how often He is called “the God of peace,” while **He is never called the God of joy**. Joy is an uneven thing. Joy gives us the thought of hearing good news, and

sorrow may be there too. There is joy indeed in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, for that is good news there; but it is not God's nature like peace. It is an emotion of the heart. Man is a poor and weak creature. He hears good news, and he has joy; he hears sad news, and he has sorrow. It is the ups and downs of a creature-nature. But He is "the God of peace." It is a deeper thing. Look at the world and the human heart; do you ever see peace there? Joy we do see in the animal nature even; as in a beast let loose. And we may see a kind of joy in the world, but there is no peace; the heart of man is "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest"—incessant harassment for amusement, and they call that joy. The world is a restless world, and if it cannot be restless in activity to get what it wants, it is restless because it cannot. We never find peace in this world except when God gives it.

If we are walking in the power of the life of Christ, the God of peace is with us. We have the consciousness of His presence. The heart is at rest; there is no craving after something we have not got. Even among Christians we see persons who have no peace because they are craving after what they have not got. That is not peace. But enjoying what is in Him, though surely craving to know Him better, is blessed rest of heart;—it is peace. It is a blessed thing to have such a sanctuary in this world—"the God of peace" with us.

We then see how Paul is superior to all circumstances. He had been in want, though in a kind of free prison, and his heart felt it. "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again." He says, "now at the last," as if they had been a little bit careless. But there is a gracious delicacy towards them; he at once withdraws what he had said, by adding, "but ye lacked opportunity." There is never insensibility in the Christian's superiority, else it is no superiority. In all circumstances the heart is free to act according to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He was never insensible. We steel ourselves against circumstances; our poor selfish hearts like to get away from suffering. But He was always Himself in the circumstances. So, as has been said, there was no character in Christ. He was always

Himself. Perfectly sensitive to all things, but never governed by them, always in them in the strength of His own grace. We never find Him unmoved. When He saw the crowd, He was "moved with compassion towards them"; and when He saw the bier which carried out the only son of the widow, He had pity on her; and at the grave of Lazarus "He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled"—a strong expression, it is, He troubled Himself inwardly. The power of death in the people around Him pressed on His spirit. No matter where He was, He was never insensible, but was Himself in grace for that He was sensible of. On the cross, He had the right word for the thief. Even when He had to say, "How long shall I be with you, and suffer you?" He immediately adds, "Bring thy son hither." He was perfectly sensitive, as we are not, with His grace always ready to be called out. What shews itself in Christ is what we should seek to be; that is, perfectly sensitive to all circumstances, but that they should meet Christ in us, so as to draw Him out.

We have seen how Paul corrects what he had said, "at the last your care of me hath flourished again," by adding, "ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." We never find the Lord correcting Himself. Paul was a man of like passions as we are. At Troas he could not stop, though a great door was opened to him for preaching the gospel; he had no rest in his spirit because he did not find Titus. In Macedonia, too, his flesh had no rest. And he says of that epistle which gives us inspired directions for the assembly (we could not do without it), that he was not sorry he had written it, though he had been sorry; and yet he had been inspired to write it. His heart had sunk below the place he was in, when he thought all the Corinthians had turned against him. It is blessed in one sense to see that, though he was an apostle, he was so like us: but we would not see it in the blessed Lord. Perfect sensitiveness, but perfection in it, is what we see in Him; while we see the apostle was a man, though it is interesting to see him feeling in that way.

He then goes on to shew, that he was superior to all these circumstances. "Not that I speak in respect of want, for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be

content.” “I can **do all things** through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Power has come in for us, beloved friends. People say, Oh! we can do all things through Christ, as a kind of absolute truth. I say, **Can you?** You cannot. Oh! you say, a person can; and this is perfectly true as an absolute statement, but it is not what the apostle meant. He meant that he could do all things; he had learned it. It was a real state for him, **not an abstract proposition**. “I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry.” If full, He keeps me from being careless, and indifferent, and self-satisfied; if hungry, He keeps me from being cast down and dissatisfied. With him it was not a man can, but I have found Christ so sufficient in every circumstance that I am under the power of none. He had been beaten of rods: five times he had received of the Jews forty stripes, save one; he had been stoned, and he had gone through all sorts of things; but he had found Christ sufficient in them all.

And do not say, Ah! that was when he was a mature Christian; it was very well to say it at the end of his life. If he had not found Christ thus sufficient from the beginning right through to the end, he could not have said what he did at the end. It is that faith reckons on Christ from the starting point of Christian life. It is the principle I was referring to in Psalm 23. When the Psalmist had gone through everything, he says, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” Full or hungry I shall always find that He is enough. But to be able to experience this at the end it must be experienced by the way.

Do not say, Oh! he was an apostle! he was a wonderfully blessed man, far above the evil that is torturing me. No such thing! He had a thorn in the flesh while he was writing; and though that was not power, it put him into nothingness where the power could come in. The Lord would not take it away when Paul besought Him. “My grace is sufficient for thee,” was His answer. It seemed a hindrance; but, when he preached, Christ’s power was seen, not Paul’s. I refer to it so that you should not say that he was free from the difficulties and snares of the flesh.

God had put him in danger of being exalted above measure by taking him up to the third heaven, and He sent him a thorn to make nothing of him, and then His strength was made perfect in weakness. **Divine strength cannot be where human strength is.** If it had been human strength, Paul's converts would have been worth nothing; but God's converts were worth eternal life. It is a great thing that we should be made nothing of. If we do not know how to be nothing, God must make us nothing. A humble person does not need to be humbled.

Paul was dependent upon Christ—absolutely dependent on Christ—and we find the infallible faithfulness of Christ to him. But, I repeat, he could not have said it at the end, if he had not experienced it by the way. It is a blessed testimony. He is sufficient for us where we are; but He must bring us to the point of uprightness. The soul must be in the truth of its state before God. Till the conscience get into the place where I really am—till it get the consciousness of distance from God, and unfaithfulness to Him—it is not upright. But when it gets there, Now, says God, I have got you right; I can help you. Job said, “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help.” I did this, I did that. That will not do, says God; that is all I, I, I. So He lets the devil loose upon him till Job curses the day in which he was born, but at last he says, “Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself.” That will do, says God; now I can bless you. And He did bless him.

God would have us not merely holding our heads above water, but going on in the strength of His grace.

“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.” Love is never forgetful; it treasures up acts of service. And the apostle treasured up in memory the things, wherein he had been cared for. God delights in service done to His saints; even what is done to the world He delights in too.

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Mark the **intimacy** there is in “my God.” It is **emphatic**. It is saying, I know Him; I can answer for Him; I have come through all kinds of things, and I can answer for it that He never failed me. I know the way He acts even in the small things of everyday life.

It is a great thing to trust God daily and hourly; not thinking we can provide for ourselves, and secure ourselves against the power of evil, but to trust God thoroughly. And what is the measure of the supply? Nothing short of “his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” He must glorify Himself—even in the falling of a sparrow—for there is nothing great and nothing small with God. He thinks of what His love must glorify itself in.

“My God shall supply all your need.” How could Paul tell that? He knew Him. Not that he had not been in a condition of want, but he had felt the preciousness of being met in it by God. Things may look very dark, but we have always found that, if He led us by the wilderness where there was no water, He brought water out of the stony rock for us there. He always exercises faith, but He always meets it. Their coats even did not grow old for forty years. This is a blessed result.

“My God shall supply all your need.” He was counting on blessing for others. What a comfort! Instead of walking by sight, to be passing through this world in the blessed consciousness of what God is for oneself, and so able to count on Him for others. We find ourselves sometimes almost dreading to press a person into the path of faith; but we should not dread, but count on grace for them. Faith is always triumphant.

The Lord give us to count on Him always, and we shall then say, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Part 2—Fragments

Philippians—General Remarks

Truth for the Last Days #3. Dublin, July 1868

Miscellaneous Writings, vol.4 p.209

In Philippians we get the experience of the Christian, but no allusion to sin. All the out-goings of the heart—Christ. There is no “if as to being in Christ, but plenty of “ifs” the moment we get Christ in us. Caleb and Joshua were sustained as examples of the power of faith in the wilderness; that is Philippians, God sustaining in grace where there was only weakness. The wilderness is the production of Christ's life in the circumstances of this life. Canaan is the power of Christ introducing us into spiritual conflict with the power of Satan. Holiness is as needed for one as the other, for the words said to Moses at the bush are repeated to Joshua in the Land (*cf* Ex.3:5, and Josh.5:15).

The epistle to the Philippians is a pattern of Christian experience as it ought to be: the power of the Spirit of God leading in the path of God amid the manifold trials of the path—heavy trials of Christians getting on badly—all seeking their own. But faith cannot be hindered by circumstances in its link with God, nor, therefore, in thoughtful service for men, suited though it might be to the need around. The character of Christ, giving up self, is just what is needed for this.

Chapter 3 presents the energy of divine life connected with a Christ gone up as Man on high. Chapter 2 presents what forms our character down here—Christ came down. The two together give us the display of divine life in us. In one, Paul is on the way to glory and all else is dross and dung—there is no difficulty in giving that up. I may have a very good cloak in a race, but if I want to run I throw it off. What I get in the other gives me Christ as the object, imparting the mind of Christ, giving up self. If not given up—judged and got rid of—it impedes. The grace without the energy would be human sentiment; the energy without the grace would be stoicism.

The terms of the exhortation in chapter 2:14-16, tell us that what Christ was, we are to be. It is the power in the

midst of the reign of evil. It is not the reign of good now. The failure of man was always uniform and immediate, but no failure can break the link of faith with the power of God. The darkest circumstances brighten the light; a candle is nothing in the day, it is seen for miles in the night. Dark times become *the* times for the *manifestation* of faith.

It is a great thing to have the right thing, but it is blessed and needed to have the mind of God to carry out the right. Now, if self is at work, this is hindered. See the Apostle's grace in chapter 2:1-2, the mind of Christ is the perfect model of this. Does our energy take the form of a servant? It may be of faith, and with a true heart, but does it take the place of service?

The blessedness in glory is not simply blessedness, but Christ ministering to it. By abiding in Him we get His mind—self nowhere. The man that is walking in Christ is occupied with Him, and sees Christ in his brother, and all the ugliness of self in himself, so he finds it easy to esteem each better than himself. Just because of love the parent sees all the good qualities of his child. The power of good in the midst of evil is learnt in the coming down of Christ from the glory to the cross.

Mark another character of the life—obedience (2:8). There is nothing so humble and unselfish as obedience, because self does not work at all. The Word forms this: we live by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. There is no truth in the world, but in the Word of God. Christian obedience is not being stopped in a will of our own, but in having no will—God in His Word guiding the new nature.

Chapter 2:12. The contrast is between Paul's work and God's work in the Christian. No deprivation of Apostolic power will stop obedience by God's working in us—only then there is called for more earnestness and seriousness, for Paul was a mighty warrior.

Salvation is the result in glory. Salvation is never looked at as simple redemption, but as the result in glory and blessing. We are subjects of the conflict between God and Satan. What a serious position! Which would you like,

Christ's place, i.e., no place; or honour and position in the world?

Verses 15 and 16 describe exactly what Christ was—that is the Christian.

Christian Experience—Philippians

Words of Truth, vol.4 p.89 [1869]

The Epistle to the Philippians leads us into a very peculiar apprehension of the Christian's path. Christian experience is before us, and not the doctrines of Christianity.

It is this which characterizes the Epistle throughout. We find in it that the soul has learned that which renders it superior to all the testing of circumstances through which it has to pass. This is why I call it peculiar, for in saying it is Christian experience, one says a great deal, for it is really the life of Christ in the saint, tested by circumstances, but found under the testing superior to them all. And it is well for our souls to look this in the face, and to see how far our own spirits in tone, and thought, and mind, answer to this each day.

And here I would remark, that as it is the Christian's path through the world that is before us in this epistle, we shall find that salvation is always put at the end of the path as a thing to be obtained. Thus the apostle says in the first chapter (v.19), "This shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." So in the third chapter, when he is speaking of himself, he does not say, he is in Christ, but "that I may win Christ, and be found in him." Christ is the object for which he is running. It is in the same character he speaks of righteousness. He does not say here "made the righteousness of God in him," but you see him casting away his righteousness, which he had by the law, that he might be found in Christ, "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Again, in the second chapter, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God

which worketh in you.” Always, you see, looking to the end for salvation. It is thus scripture always speaks of salvation, when it takes up our responsibility as Christians. But in speaking thus, such scriptures always suppose us set in redemption, and then address us upon our responsibility, as being in a settled relationship with God.

It is most important to see this, that we are first set in the place of redemption, before we are called upon to run to the end of the race. In looking into this Epistle you will see how the path lies through all kinds of adverse circumstances, but at the same time you will see that there is a power come in by Christianity that supposes this, that in running the Christian course, we should be always glorifying Christ, and entirely above the circumstances in which we are found.

Before pressing upon you what the path is, and the responsibility flowing from our place as Christians, I will say a few words upon the exercises which the soul goes through before it can take this place. In fact, these exercises before redemption is known are kept entirely distinct in God’s word from the exercises and responsibility which characterize us as Christians, after having received the knowledge of redemption. It is most important that we should be clear as to this, for one finds that persons are constantly mixing up their responsibility with their standing.

Responsibility always flows from the place in which we are. You must be in a relationship before you can have the responsibilities, duties, if you please, of the relationship.

I must be a child before I can act as a child ought to act to its father; and so with the woman, she must be a wife before her responsibility as a wife begins. Now sin has not destroyed our responsibility to God as His creatures. But sin having come in, the responsibility of man as such must end in judgment. The soul must learn this before it can know redemption, which delivers us from that standing altogether. It is when we know that Christ has met this responsibility in the cross, and that we are accepted in Him, as gone on high, that Christian responsibility begins;

whereas our responsibility as sinners refers to our acceptance. As to this responsibility, we have God's testimony that we are lost. But souls individually go through a process shorter or longer, before coming to this in the conscience, before, as Scripture puts it, "submitting themselves to the righteousness of God." It may be learnt suddenly or it may be a longer process, but it must be learnt, "That," as the apostle says, "in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The deeper the ploughing up in, learning this the better, but whether it be by a process shorter or longer, we must come to this judgment of what we are in the presence of God, before we can know what God has wrought through and in Christ to deliver us from this condition altogether. Before we can learn that, as regards our standing in Adam as sinners, we are redeemed out of it by Christ, and now we are in Him, accepted in the Beloved. The old state and standing is gone, and the believer's place is in a standing and condition, which God has made for him in Christ. The angels see us in Christ up there. Christ is in us down here—do those around, does the world see that as clearly?

These exercises of the soul which precede this knowledge of our settled Christian place are all most valuable and useful, in order to teach us thoroughly what we are, and that our standing is not in the flesh, and we get settled peace by knowing we are not in the flesh at all. We put our seal to the truth of God, in the judgment He puts upon us, and our souls, having divine light, say, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" not only as a doctrine in Scripture, but saying it as true of ourselves in the presence of God. It is then we get settled peace. Christ has gone through the judgment, and all the fruits of the flesh have been borne by Christ on the cross, and are put away for ever, so that the whole thing is put away from God's sight. But more than that, Christ glorified God by doing it, and has entered into God's presence as man on high. He has entered as conqueror, and He sends down the Comforter to dwell in us, so that I can say, my standing is no more in the flesh, in the first Adam at all, but in the second! I was lost, but He has died to put away sin, He has been made sin and has borne our sins, so that the nature

and its acts are all gone, and I am no more in the flesh, but in Christ, united to Him by the Spirit, and thus a new creation in Him. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you," is my consciousness now.

Thus we are delivered entirely from our responsibility as belonging to the first Adam, before Christian responsibility begins. When in the flesh. I was responsible to God, and was hoping to be saved, and found myself lost on that ground. Christian responsibility flows from another standing and relationship altogether. I did belong to the first Adam, and was lost. I do belong to the last Adam, and am saved. I now am in Him, in the new man. There is a responsibility connected with that. You find in this epistle, not the doctrines stated to bring us into this place, though there are statements of doctrine, for instance, the statement in the third chapter of the righteousness of God, as we find in all the word of God, but what characterizes the epistle is the effect produced by the Spirit of God in the Christian, when he is in this place of acceptance, and not the doctrines about the place.

We have to judge ourselves, whether, if in this place, we are using this true liberty, as James says, according to the "perfect law of liberty" walking as those who have died to sin, and are alive to God through Jesus Christ.

Now there is another remark I would make. Sin is never mentioned in the epistle, and this comes out remarkably in the third chapter, when he is speaking of justification. Even there sin is not mentioned. It is his righteousness, and not his sins, that he casts away; so that he may have a better righteousness, even "the righteousness which is of God by faith." It is not that the flesh was altered in Paul. The flesh never grows better. Paul needed a thorn to keep it down, but what we find in this epistle is that a power has come in and dwells in us, which leaves us always without excuse, if there is a thought even that is not under the control of the Spirit of God. I grant that it is not always at the moment of trial that you have power to resist, but if there had been watchfulness and distrust of self, you would not have got into that condition.

There may be liberty of heart with God, and confidence in Him, so as to say, I am a child of God, and I know my place in Christ, and can rejoice in it, as the testimony of the riches of God's mercy. All this may be true, and I suppose it, but is there that practical occupation of the heart with Christ, that you can say, "to me to live is Christ?" Is there the pressing after Him to win Him? Is there "the growing up into Him in all things?" We can say, "He has given me a place with His Son. He has united me to Him, and I am in His child." We may rejoice in this being our place, and that we are thus in Him, and that He will display His glory in us throughout the countless ages of eternity. This is what the Holy Ghost gives us now to enjoy in Him. We are of God, part of His new creation in Christ, and in this we find all is perfection. "All things are of God." Well, then, the believer can say, "I am of God. I have a place which is the testimony of the riches of His grace. He has given me a place with and in His Son, that I may be like Him and enjoy this nearness to God which Christ has. But if Christ is in the presence of God for me, I am here in this world for Him." It is there where God has set us. All is perfect in Christ. The old man crucified with Him, put off with his deeds, and the new man put on, but yet as a matter of fact we have the flesh to contend with, and we have a scene to go through where everything is temptation. Consequently, the character we take is overcoming, realizing the presence of God with us in the midst of evil, but because God's strength is with the Christian, we find in the Apostle's path through the Epistle, uniform, constant, unvarying superiority over the evil, so that he could say, "To me to live is Christ." Now, dear brethren, I ask is it thus with you? I am not speaking of outward conduct. I suppose your life to be blameless before others. Where it is sin, that others can see, then it is a case for the discipline of the Church, but I am not supposing this of any here. I suppose that your life is outwardly what is right and becoming, but then our outward conduct is but a part of our life—the far greater part of our daily life goes on in our thoughts and feelings. It is in what passes within hour by hour that we really live. Well then, in speaking for myself, and supposing much

the same of you, even in looking back upon this day, one cannot say of oneself, "For me to live was Christ." I don't doubt it, we ask, as being true of you in the main. I grant that your own conscience will know whether even in the main it has been true of you today but I come now to your thoughts and their sources. Was Christ in them all this day? Was the Spirit the source of them all? Surely in looking back only one day, one sees that a thousand things have travelled over the road of one's soul which neither Christ nor the Spirit let in.

We have a beautiful figure of this guardianship of the entire man under Christ and the Spirit, in the Old Testament type of the cleansing of the leper, where blood was put on the tip of the right ear, upon the thumb of the right hand, and upon the great toe of the right foot, and then the oil put upon the blood. Every avenue to the mind, guarded in this double way by the blood and the oil on the ear, that nothing might pass, which was unbecoming Christ's glory or the Spirit's presence. Then every action of the man, guarded in this double way by the blood and the oil on the thumb of the right hand, and so with the foot, that the whole walk should be under the same guardian care. Surely in looking back only one day, we shall find much that has passed the blood, that Christ did not let in. Many thoughts and desires not coming from, the Spirit.

The Lord give unto us, beloved brethren, that there may be such an occupation of heart with Christ, such a living in the fear of God, such a walking in the gracious guidance of the Spirit, that we may be able to say like the Apostle, "To me to live is Christ, and to die, gain."

Words of Truth, vol.4 p.140 [1869]

The energy with which the Christian is to run that race which ends in the glory and in complete conformity to Christ there, is brought out in a marked way in the third chapter of Philipians.

Indeed, throughout the whole epistle, we see this complete superiority over everything the Christian has to pass through on his way to the glory. Christ is the object to be won, and this gives energy to press on after Himself. He is

there in the glory as the goal of my course; as the Apostle says, "That I may win Christ and be found in him;" "that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Thus I know what I shall get at the end of the race. I shall have Him in glory, and be fashioned like unto Him as a heavenly man. Well, and what is the road I must take to win Him! We find that in the second chapter. It is to walk through the world as He did, in every respect having the "mind" which was in Him; always willing to go down, doing the will of God in all lowliness and meekness and dependence upon Him. It is the graciousness and lowliness of Christ we get here; and then, whatever be the testing of circumstances, able to say, as in the 4th chapter, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me."

Christ has run the race, and is set down to shew where it ends, that we may have the eye and heart where He is, on the end. That is what we are called to. "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Christ has set Himself apart in the glory, and the Spirit of God takes and unfolds Him to us, that we may be like Him, and express the same mind which was in Him, in His pathway to the glory.

There is a positive progress, a growing up into Him which is the head in all things; but there is no such thing as growing in meetness for heaven. When souls are not clear as to their place in Christ, they mix up meetness and growth. But there is not such a thought in scripture. There is growing in grace; but when the apostle speaks of meetness, it is "giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." (Col.1:12.) There is no growth in that. The dying thief was as meet for heaven as Paul was. We are "in Christ." Is not that being meet for heaven? Not that God would overlook Paul's labours, all true in its place, but we have to get the perception that we are taken clean out of the place we were in, and now we are in Christ, who is our righteousness and our life, and then the path in which we are called to walk with Him, is to have every thought under the control of the Spirit of God.

In the sixth verse of the first chapter of Philippians, the apostle speaks of the good work begun in them; "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." Salvation here is a future thing. It is that He has begun a good work in them. Now though not seeing this, people often speak of the work begun in them, and mix it with, fitness for heaven.

There is another remark I would make. Just as salvation is looked at in the future when we are running here below, as in this epistle, so you will not find the "coming of Christ" spoken of. It is the "day of Christ" when we are to be manifested before Him. The coming is our being caught up to meet Him. That is always connected with sovereign grace—the day of Christ is connected with our responsibility. So here it is, "He that hath begun a good work in you." This is never said of our standing in Christ. There all is perfect and finished. All is divine certainty, but the moment Scripture takes up the race of the Christian, he speaks of our responsibility, and then you will find "ifs" and warnings; but mark, no "ifs" about God's faithfulness. "Being confident that He which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Even when he is running the race (in ch.3) he adds, "If by any reason I may attain..."

If I want to know how a sinner can be justified, I turn to the Romans. There the question is fully answered, both as to sins, and in condemning the nature that committed the sins; and the soul is set free in Christ, so that there is no more any condemnation. The sins are atoned for, the standing in the flesh is gone. There is a complete justification from it all, and the believer is no longer in the flesh but in Christ. In the Ephesians you don't get justification. For man is looked upon as already dead in sins, and then a new creation is brought in which is entirely of God, so that justification is not needed for that. I cannot only say as a sinner I have been justified through Christ, but I am of God, as it says, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption." Oh, it is an immense blessing to be able to say, "I am of God's

new creation.” “His workmanship.” It is more than justification. God justifies the sinner—He does not need to justify His own workmanship. Everything now is of God in the new creation; who “hath reconciled us to himself.” What a blessed thing to know that God has a new creation, and that I am of it. Not because we were created by Him, for in that sense we are all of God’s creation, but I speak of God’s new creation in Christ.

We don’t find this justification, etc, doctrinally set forth in the Philippians, but rather the Christian’s experience flowing from the new position. So in the sixth verse, it is not our perfect standing in Christ, but a work begun in us; and the moment Scripture speaks of the race or path to the glory there are “ifs” of every kind. I may have to say to you, He will “present you holy and unblameable, and unreprougeable, in His sight, if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled.” For unless the work is divine in you of course it will all die away. Like the foolish virgins whose lamps went out because they had no oil, and then it would turn out to be only a new profession.

Thus Scripture speaks of “ifs” when taking up the side of our responsibility and running the race; but then in this the heart is cast upon the faithfulness of God, and there is no “if” there! In the wilderness course we get the wanderings, the failures, the murmurings, but with these you get the faithfulness of God. In the land you find conflict, but the armour is there for us, the strength is there too to give us power to overcome. We are in both, though not consciously at the same moment. He points out the danger, and yet the consciousness of being in Christ is always ours. God says, as it were, “You must be dependent on me, you will need to be kept,” but do not mix the two things up and say, because you have to run the race in the wilderness, and to fight in the conflict in Canaan, you are still in Egypt.

There is no conflict in Egypt. In Egypt God comes down to deliver. He is a redeemer in Egypt. First with the blood on the door post to shield from judgment, then in delivering power at the Red Sea. It is blessed to see how He suits Himself to His people. In Egypt, in their bondage, He comes as their deliverer. In the wilderness He goes

with them in the pillar of fire and cloud to guide and shelter them by night and by day, and He feeds them with manna every day. Not taking His manna away, though they lusted after the flesh pots of Egypt. Always faithful to them. If they have not faith to enter the land, but are turned back to wander for thirty-eight years, His cloud turns back with them, and He makes Himself a tabernacle and wanders with them. Then when they crossed Jordan and are to have conflict, He appears to them as a man with a drawn sword in His hand, saying to Joshua, "as captain of the Lord's host am I now come." Then when they are settled in peace in the land He builds Himself a great house like the palaces of the great ones of the earth.

Thus, when I think of redemption it is a settled thing, there is no question of conflict. It is a delivering God who delivers completely out of the place we were in; but He will go through the wilderness with you in running on to the glory. He means us to go through it that we may learn ourselves and learn Him. As He says He "humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna," etc. "Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years," etc. It was all that they might learn what they were and what God was. That is a different thing from redemption. If we have passed the Red Sea we have done with Egypt, and if I don't see this, I shall say under pressure as Israel did, "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Ex.14:11.) But God says— "I bare you on eagle's wings and brought you unto myself."

Have you not found the need of grace in the pathway since your soul found peace? Have you not found out the evil that is within you since then? What, in fact, your heart really is? Well, and you know He has been with you all through. There has been His manna fresh every day. He has provided the garments which wax not old. Christ's grace ministered to you day by day, daily bread that you could not hoard up, or it would have turned to self-righteousness, like the hoarded manna which stank and bred worms. God was carrying the children of Israel through the wilderness for a double purpose, so to speak,

to teach them what they were and what God was, who was always faithful.

There is with the discovery of what we are, correction, of course, but with it always the blessed discovery of what He is. I shall have conflict, too, in heavenly places, as they had in Canaan, and in this I must go back to Gilgal the place of the true circumcision of the flesh to learn what that is.

While running the race here we have all the infirmity of the flesh, the danger and temptation, but we have, too, the power of God. We get heaps of warnings and "ifs" when it is a question of our getting through, but never an "if" applied to the faithfulness of God. You can't get anything you can trust to in yourselves; but there comes in the blessed experience of the faithfulness of God in which we can trust. The only process is to take us off ourselves, to get the soul back to absolute dependence, but absolute dependence upon absolute faithfulness. And this humbles us and shows us what we are, and what the world is; we may learn it slowly or quickly. If we walk with God we learn to trust Him, if we walk with self we learn ourselves and our need of Him, but we do not learn to trust Him. It is like a careless child feeling the want of his father, but not knowing him by walking with him. If I live with my friend I get to know what he is as my friend. We get every warning, and "if," as regards the path as to ourselves, but on God's side no "ifs." "He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Surely what blessedness to say we are walking in the light because Christ has rent the veil, and we are now walking as children of light.

We ought to know in passing through the world, in a higher sense than Israel did, that wherever we go He is "a little sanctuary" to us. (Ezek.11:16.) So that when I look out on the world instead of its being between me and God, I have God between me and the world; having the secret of the Lord with me, and going through the world with the light of his countenance. It is a comfort if we are walking with God to be leaning on One who never leaves me. It is a comfort, too, if not walking with Him that He restores the soul and leads in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Let us ever remember that God is faithful, so that if I am in coldness of heart, without any outward departure, but inwardly distant—not walking freely and simply with Him—(oh how easily this coldness comes upon us when all is right outwardly)—well even then He has not changed—He restores. There is with Him divine power to bring you back again into the conscious light of His countenance; and this is dependent upon the revelation of Himself to your soul, so that I can count even then upon Him to bring me back to Himself into the light and joy of His presence.

The Lord give us to run with patience (endurance) the race set before us, looking unto Him—not withdrawing our eyes from Him. Our eyes, looking straight on, and our eyelids straight before us. So to run that we may obtain—that we may “win Christ and be found in Him.” The mind of Christ in us, and able in the path to esteem others better than ourselves, for His name’s sake. Amen.

Words of Truth, vol.4 p.175 [1869]

The apostle being so near Christ himself, looks for the same grace also in the Philippians. He prays that their “love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment,” that they may “approve the things which are excellent,” that they “may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ.”

I would remark here, the gracious spirit that results from the heart being near to God. It goes out in love to others, and gives lively recollections of all the good that God has wrought in the saints.

There is no one who goes so deep in divine counsels as Paul, and yet none entered more into the details of God’s grace in others. Look at the lists of names at the end of several of his epistles. He takes up the special grace, too, that characterizes the individuals he mentions. So here, he remembers how in the beginning of the gospel the church at Philippi was the only one that communicated to his need. Their present kindness in sending help a thousand miles to him in his prison, recalls to his mind their fellowship at the beginning.

It is not only as kindness to him, but he sees in it their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; because they had him in their hearts. This activity of the recollections of grace in others is the result of nearness to God. It is the external means used by the Spirit of God to link saints together in church fellowship. It is the secret of walking together happily: having, as we find in chapter 2, the mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus. Instead of the wretched flesh, jostling one against another, he has his mind filled with the lively recollection of God's grace in the saints. Those recollections that knit the church together are also alive in his soul.

I know there is plenty that will try us in walking with others. Perhaps there never were two men who could live together, and never find anything to try them in one another. Any how, the case is a rare one; but then, when a person is living in the power of the Spirit, he has his mind filled with the grace that is in the saint. Their kindness wakes up the sense of the grace that produced the kindness. So that it is the grace that is remembered and not merely the kindness. And we see another result of his nearness to God. He is not afraid to express his praise of them on the feelings of his own heart towards them, a thing which I often find most difficult. There is not that happy liberty there would be, if the heart were more with the Lord and more simple before Him.

Now see how the Apostle prays for the Philippians— "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 offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." He expects not only that there should be increase of love and desire, but that they should grow too in spiritual intelligence, "that their love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment." Really having the mind of Christ about everything, as it says, "He that is spiritual judgeth all things." He knows exactly what will

please Christ in every turn of his life. It is more than doing what is right, it is "approving what is excellent."

Is this the desire you have before you? You are set to be the epistle of Christ. Paul says to the Corinthians, "ye are the epistle of Christ." Mark, not "ye ought to be"; but "ye are"! This is true of every believer. You are the epistle of Christ. The Apostle is referring to the law written upon the tables of stone, and just as men read the ten commandments on the tables of stone, so ought the world now to be able to read Christ as clearly in us. Ye are the epistle of Christ. Well, but what kind of an epistle are you? Is it all clear? Can the world read Christ? You cannot say it is not true that you ought to walk as Christ walked. No Christian can deny that he should do that. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." And mark the accuracy of Scripture. It does not say, you ought to be what Christ was, for He was without sin, and you have the flesh in you, and flesh will never be better, but as for its acting there is no excuse.

As for not knowing the mind of God too; how impossible, if I am walking with Christ is it, that I should not know the mind of God as to everything. Did not He walk with Him without a cloud, and know His perfect will about everything? so should we, if we walk as He walked.

Now, which is it with us? Am I saying, I won't do anything wrong, or am I seeking to know what is that good and perfect, and acceptable will of God? We should be yielding our bodies a living sacrifice to Him, yielding up ourselves to Him, and thus, as the Apostle says, be renewed in the spirit of our minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. It is the knowledge of Christ, and of the mind of God.

Do you believe the Apostle did not expect this of them? Why then did he ask it for them? Doubtless there were differences among them, some more, and some less spiritual, much as we find it now. But what is it written for, if you can excuse yourselves without it? It is more, too, than a blameless walk; he desires an increase of love, and a growth in divine knowledge—not only to keep from

what is wrong, but an approving of things which, are excellent.

It is just what we see in the address to the Church of Philadelphia. The Lord reveals Himself as "He that is holy, he that is true." And in these last days nothing is more important than to know Him thus, if you are to be kept from that terrible day of sifting. "There is my character," He says, "and you must walk with me thus, if I am to keep you from the hour of temptation which is to come upon all the world, to try them that dwell on the earth."

The apostle had to say in this epistle, "all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's." The decay had begun. He to whom Christ is all, will say, Well, my business is not to deny His name outwardly, or in anything, but to keep His word; discerning His mind in everything. It requires patience, it requires a broken will, a sense of our own nothingness, but it is the path of unmixed blessing; it is the path of nearness to Christ, and the power of hope is bright in the soul. No doubt there will be with it self-judgment; but He is leading me in my path, and remember, too, whatever removes the film from my eye to see my path clearly, removes it off Christ that I may see Him more clearly.

Can we say that this is our path, to be "sincere and without offence till the day of Christ?" Here it is the day of Christ, as the end of their responsibility; and the apostle is looking for them to be without offence till that day. It is not the question here of the sovereign grace which will present every soul blameless in that day. God has promised that, and Paul writes to the Corinthians who were walking very badly, "who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the hope that grace has given to every saint; but here he is looking for a life answering to their place in Christ, and he prays that they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

Whenever it is a question of the responsibility of the Church, it is the day of Christ; when you get the privileges of the Christian, it is the rapture; that is the fruit of

redemption! We shall all be like Christ when He appears, and Paul cannot be better than that; but when responsibility comes in it is the appearing of Christ, and we find the rewards of labour. When He thinks of this, He looks that we may be sincere and without offence till that day.

Can we say this of our path through the last week, "without offence"? There is the power to be thus. You have a nature which has the desire. You have the life of Christ, and the faithfulness and power of God to help you. Then how far can you say, "I am walking sincerely, and without offence"? Paul was no better than others as to flesh or nature. The tree is bad, but there was nothing that soiled his conscience, or that hindered him following after, though he had not already attained, neither was already perfect.

The mere fact of the existence of flesh does not give a bad conscience, but if I let it act, then the conscience is, or ought to be bad. It is like my having a bad, evil-disposed man in the house, who is bent on doing me mischief. Now as long as I keep him locked up, though he is in the house, he can do me no mischief, but if I open the door, I let him out to do the mischief, and I must suffer for it. There is no excuse for the flesh acting. You may have been careless and not have had the armour on, and the thing has hit you, but then it was this want of watchfulness and self-judgment.

But still remember, even if it is so with you, that He restores the soul. He may have to say to you, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." All you need is grace to desire, and emptiness of self to trust in His love, and faithfulness to you! I don't say that the light shining upon you will not humble you. It will, and will make you judge yourself for the failure, and be broken before Him, but it will bring with it the joy of His presence; and thus it is we learn what His grace is to us.

Now see what the Apostle could say of Himself, "according to my earnest expectation, and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as

always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death." When he wrote this he had been four years in prison, chained to a soldier, and yet he could look back upon his course and say, "as always, so now also." Oh! if we could say this, that Christ had always been "magnified" in us; and our earnest expectation and hope was that "as always, so now also". What a great thing to say; but what happiness! The Lord give us to have the eye upon Him, discerning things that differ—that are more excellent, that Christ may be glorified in our walk! Would it not make your heart happy to say, "as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body"? Well, I say, if there is watchfulness that it may be so? There will be no opportunity for this in heaven. It is here that He exhorts His people to be a faithful people abiding in Him, living witnesses in the world of what He is to them! You are called to walk with this blessed object before you.

Is there not power in Him that it should be thus with you? You can't say—No. For He says "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." But we have to remember the strength is in Him, and not in us, and to have the living earnest desire in our hearts to glorify Him from moment to moment, learning that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; going through our duties in life, but doing them to Christ and for Christ! Our affections not engaged with them, but with Him; thus manifesting whose we are, and whom we serve, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh!

To Live—Christ

Unrevised Notes of Lecture by JND⁹
Miscellaneous Writings, vol.5 p.197

This Epistle to the Philippians leads into a very peculiar apprehension of the Christian path. Its object is not doctrine, but Christian experience, and it is well for our souls to look it in the face and see how far our spirit and thought and mind answer to it day by day.

In this epistle salvation is always put at the end of the path as a thing to be attained— “that I may win Christ.” This is an important principle for our souls. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” always looking to the end; and we have first to see that we are set in the place of redemption to run to the end of our course.

At the same time you will see a power brought in that supposes that in running we shall always be glorifying Christ, and above the circumstances.

I will say here that there is always an exercise of soul which goes on before we know redemption, and there is a distinct and definite responsibility under which we lie as Christians—not the responsibility of the first man, which inevitably ends in judgment. Our responsibility as sinners refers to acceptance, but that is settled completely: we are accepted in the Beloved. Now the responsibilities are ours as Christians, and duties always flow from the place in which we are already set.

As to man’s condition, we get the truth that we are all lost, but souls individually go through a process shorter or longer before owning, this, before submitting themselves to the righteousness of God. It may be learnt suddenly, or it may be a long time about, but the soul has to recognise this, that the flesh is utterly corrupt. “In me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not ... And when I would do good evil is present with me.”

⁹ Compare with *Words of Truth*, Vol.4 p.89—which gives more detailed notes of the same lecture.

As regards our standing in Adam as sinners, we are redeemed out of it into Christ, accepted in the Beloved, and the believer is in a standing and condition which is made for him in Christ. "At that day" (the Lord said) "ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." Now, that is the only true Christian peace. The angels see us in Christ up there; Christ is in us down here. Do those around us see it, and does the world see it?

The exercises of soul which precede this are all most valuable and useful to thoroughly teach us that our standing is not in the flesh, and we then get settled peace by knowing it. We put our seal to the truth of God in the judgment He passed upon us, and our souls now having divine light say, "In me is no good thing." Not only as a doctrine of Scripture, but in the presence of God we have to own that we cannot stand a moment in His sight. And here we get another thing, that the sins of the flesh were borne by Christ on the cross and put away for ever.

Again, Christ glorified God, and is as man on high sending the Comforter down to dwell in us, so that I can say my standing is no more in the flesh, in the first Adam at all, but in the second Adam.

Well, now there is a responsibility that flows from that condition. You find in this epistle the effect produced by the Spirit of God in the Christian when he is in the place, and we have to judge whether we are using this true liberty as those who are alive to God from among the dead.

Sin is never mentioned in this epistle. It is not that the flesh is altered in Paul or made better—it never grows better. In many things we all offend, and Paul had a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him, to keep the flesh down. But this epistle shows us that a power has come in and dwells in us, which leaves us always without excuse if there is a thought that is contrary to the Spirit of God.

It is not always at the given moment we have the power to resist, but why not? Because I do not put my armour on. But whose fault is that?

There may be liberty of heart with God and confidence in Him to say I am a child of God through Christ Jesus. I have got my place, a place which is the riches of God's mercy, but is there found growth? "Growing up into Him in all things which is the Head." He has given me a place *with* His Son. He has given me to be *in* His Son, that He may unfold His glory through the countless ages of eternity—*now* through the Holy Ghost, and hereafter in glory. We have to enjoy this in Him. Our place is in the last Adam in righteousness. He has redeemed us out of the condition we were in. I am in Christ, and He is in the presence of God for me, and I am in the world for *Him*. That is where God has set us. The old man is reckoned *dead*. "Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him."

And yet as a matter of fact we have the flesh to contend with, and we have to go through a scene where everything is temptation; consequently the character we take is that of overcoming and realising the presence of God in the midst of evil. Uniform, constant, *unvarying* superiority over the evil is the striking, characteristic of the apostle's path in this epistle.

Now look at your own hearts, and you will find that in the course of this very day, in many things, looking within it has not been the life of Christ. You could not say as to them, "To me to live is Christ." I assume that it is the purpose of your heart to do so, but from hour to hour during the day there have perhaps been heaps of things travelling over the road of your soul that Christ never let in there and that the Spirit of God could not approve.

The leper in the Old Testament was first cleansed by water, and then the blood was put on the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the great toe of the right foot, afterwards being anointed by the oil put upon the blood. This is *a* beautiful type—every avenue of the soul guarded, all under the watchful care of the Spirit. But in looking within ourselves we shall find there is that which had passed the blood. We had forgotten "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus."

There *is* such an occupation of heart with Christ, such a fear of God, and such a walking in the practical guardianship of the Spirit, that a man is able to say, like the apostle, "For me to live is *Christ*." There is the power of the Spirit of God to lead the Christian through the race, that he may apprehend that for which he is also apprehended of Christ Jesus. Now in every respect you are called upon to have the mind which was in Christ Jesus, always willing to go down—humble—for it is graciousness, the grace of Christ, we get here.

In the first chapter he is determined that Christ shall be magnified in his body; in the second chapter there is the humility; in the third chapter, energy; in the fourth chapter, superiority to circumstances.

The apostle never mentions sin. Christ has run the race, and is set down to show us where the course leads to, that we may have the eye and heart where He is—on the end. That is what we are called to. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Christ has set Himself apart in the glory, and the Spirit of God takes Him and unfolds Him to us, that we may be like Him, expressing the same mind which was in Him.

There is positive progress growing up in Him, but no such thing as growing meetness for heaven. Growth is pressed upon us, but you will never find Scripture mingling the two things, meetness and growth. The thief on the cross was as meet for heaven as Paul was. Not that God will overlook Paul's labours. No! but it is that in Christ we are always meet for the glory of God.

We have to get the perception that we are taken clean out of the place we were in. Christ is our life and Christ is our righteousness. We are called to walk (with the blood on the ear) with Him, watching against every inconsistent thing. "He which hath begun a good work in you shall perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." It is not merely that we are perfect in Christ, but He has begun a work; and the moment it speaks of the path to the glory, the wilderness path, there are "ifs" of every kind. You get the

wanderings, the failures, the murmurings, but with these the faithfulness of God.

The armour is there for us, the strength is there also, to lead us to the end. We want that armour, we want that strength; there is danger, and yet I have the consciousness of being in Christ and Christ in me. It is not the path I have to run, but the dangers I have to meet. God says, You must be dependent on Me. You will need to be kept, but, do not mix up the two things, and because you have conflict in Canaan say that you are still in Egypt. There was no conflict in Egypt. God suits Himself so blessedly to His people. In Egypt, in their bondage, He comes as their Deliverer. In the wilderness He is with them to guide them night and day by the fiery cloudy pillar, and feed them with manna when they longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. When they have to turn back on the borders of the promised land, through want of faith to enter it, God turns back with them and dwells in a tabernacle. After forty years, when they get to the land and are to have conflict, there is the angel with the drawn sword; and when they are settled in the land He builds a house like one of the palaces of the great ones of the earth.

When I think of redemption it is no question of conflict, it is a delivering God who can completely deliver us out of the place we were in, but He will go through the wilderness with you, He will humble you, He will prove you; you will have to learn what you are, but also prove what He is. That is a different thing from redemption. If we have passed the Red Sea we have done with Egypt; and if I do not see this it may be with me as with Israel, who said, "Because there were no graves in Egypt hast thou brought us to die in the wilderness?" But God said, "I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." Have you not found the need of grace? He feeds with manna; He provides the garments that wax not old, He meets the need, and He carried the children of Israel through the wilderness for the double purpose, *so* to speak, to learn what they were and to learn what He was. He was *always* faithful. There is the discovery of what we are (with correction of course), but always the blessed discovery of what He is. I shall find conflict, and I shall

have to go back to Gilgal, where the reproach of Egypt was rolled away, for that is the true circumcision of the flesh. Thus we learn in this way, whether in the wilderness or in conflict, what we are and what God is.

While we are going through the path here we have all the infirmity of the flesh, the dangers and the temptations, but we have the power of God. We get heaps of warnings and "ifs" when it is a question of our getting to the end, but never such a word as "if" applied to the faithfulness of God: "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The very process is to take us off ourselves back practically to absolute dependence upon absolute faithfulness, so that there is growth.

Paul was not perfect; no one is. He had been four years in prison, chained to a soldier, but he was making request for the Philippians, with joy and with the confident sense that they had him on their heart, acknowledging the love that led them to send help to him a thousand miles away, and he was persuaded that God would accomplish His work in them.

All this humbles us and shows us what the world is. We may learn it slowly or quickly; if slowly we shall learn self, but if we walk with God we learn to trust Him. If we walk with self we learn ourselves and our need of Him, but we do not learn to trust Him. Like a careless child feeling the need of his father, but not knowing or trusting him. If I live with my *friend* I get to know what he is as my friend.

As regards the path we get every kind of warning and "ifs" on our side, but on God's side there are no "ifs." "He will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Surely what blessedness to say we are walking in the light because Christ has rent the veil, and as children of light we ought to be able to know in a higher sense than Israel that wherever we go He will be "a little sanctuary" to us. Is He to us a sanctuary? We look out on the world, what is it? Instead of its being between me and God I have got God between the world and me. We have the secret of the Lord, and go on through the world with the light that He

gives. It is a comfort if we are walking with God, to be leaning on *One who never leaves me*. He restores my soul in failure and leads me in the paths of righteousness. If the heart is getting cold, not walking freely and simply with Him as it should do, remember there is Divine power and Divine grace. Recollect this, "He restoreth my soul." He will bring me back to Himself in the light and joy of His presence.

We get in this epistle a lively recollection of all the *good* that is in the saints—he enters into all the details of it. There is the power of individualising which grace gives. Now, where the soul is with God these are constantly kept fresh; it is filled with the recollection of the grace that is in the saints. "It is meet," he writes, "to think this of you all, *because you* have me in your heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace." This is the external means used by the Spirit of God to link the Church together. Instead of the wretched flesh jostling one against another, there is the lively recollection of all that is good, and a knitting together of the hearts by these means. It wakes up the grace that produces the kindness—not merely the kindness. And another thing we see, he is not afraid to express his praise of them or the feelings of his own heart towards them—a thing which I often find most difficult. He has true liberty to speak, being with the Lord in spirit and simple before Him. "God is my record, how greatly I long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ," etc.

It is this, in a great measure, made me take up this chapter: "That your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Is that the idea we have before us? He expects not only the love and desire on their part, but that there should be also *spiritual intelligence*. If I were perfectly spiritual I should know what to do in all things. And this is set before us. We are set to be witnesses of Christ, and we *are* the epistle of Christ, not we ought to be. And just as men read in the children of Israel the law and the ten commandments, so ought men now to read Christ in us—Christ engraved, as it were, in you. It does not say you ought to be what He was then, but you ought to walk as He walked. How impossible, if I am

walking with Christ, realising Him, is it that I shall not know the mind of God as to everything! Did not He walk with Him without a cloud? We should be yielding our bodies as living sacrifices to Him.

This is not merely that I will not do wrong, but that which is the perfect will of God. It is the knowledge of Christ and of the mind of God proving what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. If He does not expect this of us, why then does He put it? He *does* expect it of us, that we should have this knowledge of Him, and walk as He walked down here. (v.9-10.) It is not saying, That is wrong; or, There is no harm in that; but it is knowing the perfect will of God.

He that is holy, He that is true, is the character that Christ takes in addressing the Church of Philadelphia; and in these last days nothing is more important than to see Him thus, if you care to be kept out of that terrible day of sifting. He says, I am holy, I am true; you must walk with Me like that. He to whom Christ is all will say, Well, I am not to deny His Name outwardly, nor in anything; I am knit to Him. It requires patience, a broken will, and it requires a sense of our own nothingness; but it is a path of unmixed blessing and of nearness to Christ, and it is the power of hope. He is leading me on in my path, and whatever removes the film from my eyes to see my path clear removes the film from my eye to see Him clearly. When you have the responsibility of the world or the Church, you are referred to the day of Christ. When you get the privileges of the Christian, you have the rapture of the Church—that is, the fruit of completed redemption. We shall be like Christ, and Paul cannot be better than that. But when responsibility comes in we get the reward of labour: and what He looks for is that we should be sincere and without offence. Can we say “without offence” through this past week? You have a nature which has the desires; you have the life of Christ and the faithfulness of God to keep you; now how far can you say with all that, I am walking sincerely and without offence? Paul was no better than others as to flesh or nature—the tree is bad; but there was nothing that soiled his conscience. He had not indeed already attained, neither

was already perfect, but he followed after. It is not the mere existence of flesh that gives me a bad conscience, but the letting it act. It is like a mischievous madman in a house. I must keep him locked up or he will do mischief.

We have to be sincere and without offence “according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I may be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death.” It always had been his hope and always would be. Oh, if we could say this—Christ magnified! The Lord give us to have the eye upon Him, discerning things (that differ) that are excellent, that we may walk so as to glorify Him in our bodies. Would it not make your heart happy to say, “Always so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body?” Well, I say, is there watchfulness to make it so? You are called to walk with that blessed object before you; is there not power in Him? You can’t say, No!

It is a thing there will be no opportunity for in heaven. It is here He expects His people to be the living witnesses in the world of what He is to them. Would that our hearts may believe there is power in Him for that. My grace *is* sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness. But we have to remember that the strength is in Him, not in us. May the living earnest desire of our hearts be to glorify Christ, and from moment to moment carrying Christ in our hearts, to do our duties to Christ and for Christ, so that His life may be manifested in our mortal bodies.

Philippians and Corinthians

Notes and Comments, vol.5 p.99 [1874]

The whole force of 2 Corinthians 5 is the power of life in Christ manifested in resurrection, and complete in glory, founded on death so as to put a total end to the first man and to sin (He having been made sin), and hence an entrance as out of the first into the new creation where all things are of God. As to this, it is a most comprehensive statement. I would show the principle of this briefly. Beside death and judgment, we have it applied to our course here. All were dead since Christ died for all—they have to live to Him who died for them and rose again. But this goes very far, because Christ Himself, in so far as He came connecting Himself with men in the flesh, disappears. He came under law—Son of David—a minister of the circumcision—of whom according to the flesh Christ came. All this is gone. He died as to this, and died for all—all were dead. Hence the Christian knows no one after the flesh in his new nature; risen in Christ, he has nothing, no connection with the world of Adam the other side of death. That belonged to the life of flesh, and the link is broken in the death of Christ, and the life in which he lives does not belong to it. He is entered into, as risen, and is of the new Creation—the old things are wholly passed away, he is dead, and has no more to say to them. The life he lives belongs to another order of things, and he is entered into them in that life, having died out of the others, or holding himself for dead—Christ having died to and out of it—and risen up from this in a new life, Christ. In this new Creation all things are of God (we the firstfruits of it), all entirely new. Two things are attached to this: we are reconciled to God—we are made the righteousness of God. But how entirely new all this is!

Note, the point of connection between the beginning and end of the chapter is, that the love of Christ being in his heart, the thought of the terror of the Lord urged him to persuade men. Then this love of Christ, i.e., the way it showed itself, brought out the great truth of men's state and their bringing into a wholly new Creation which identifies itself with that power of life with which the chapter begins, while all is grounded, as to righteousness,

on Christ being made sin for us. In the beginning, the power of this life, as to death and as to judgment, is remarkably brought out. On the whole, the deliverance is astonishingly developed in this chapter. It is a wonderful chapter.

Note further in 2 Corinthians 5, after, as already noted, speaking of our direct positive condition as flowing from divine power in life, bringing us into glory, death being wholly annihilated, he contemplates death for us, as having this life, and it is of course gain. Here oneself (not in an evil sense) is brought in. And this, note, is the motive for our seeking to be acceptable to Him, knowing we shall be with Him in glory, and even our souls, if we die before the glory come. We like to be agreeable to One we love when with Him, besides there is the solemnity as well as the joy of the Lord's presence. But then, in taking up the second part of man's lot—the judgment—we get a distinct difference of the great principle, and the effect, where Christ's love is truly known. In the latter case, a person does not think of himself at all—the love of Christ constrains him, and he thinks of others. Thus responsibility and being manifested before the judgment-seat, and receiving the things done, is kept as solid ground of warning before the soul. And there is the active toil of grace to be acceptable and pleasing to Him. But when judgment comes as terror before his mind as it is, the Apostle only thinks of others through the constraining love of Christ. Perhaps Paul had been accused of being beside himself, but at any rate he distinguishes between his own joy and blessing in rising up to God by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the sober judgment of what was suitable. I apprehend he spoke of his condition as in chapter 4, and even in chapter I, for their sakes, still his doing it thus brought him to the point of responsibility and view of the judgment. But the effect of this on himself, as we have seen, was to urge his love to others. This love in Christ being in the death of Christ had a double effect. He did not know Christ as a living Messiah before His death any more. He was now not his own at all, but Christ's. So if any man were in Christ, he was of and in a new Creation, of which Christ was the first fruits in

resurrection, where all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself by that work. The whole of that is then set out, verses 19-21.

So, how very different the character (also noticed) of Philippians 2 and 3—the subduedness, readiness to suffer, watchfulness for God's presence and character in the midst of this world, in the first; and the spiritual energy which looks forward to the next, and glory in it, Christ in glory being before his mind to win in the latter. I do not know but the first is the deepest. In the second we win Christ and glory—blessed thing surely—but it is more what we get. In the former, we are like Him, and His love and character are more thought of, and we living in and according to them to His glory. But both are perfect in their place. So most gracious, divine affections come out in chapter 2, but earnest zeal against evil, inconsistent with the glory, in professors in chapter 3. Still, in love, weeping; still chapter 2:17, 30, enters far more into saintly feelings. We are among the *chasidim* (saints) on the earth, not thinking with weeping of those who slight the glory.

In sum, we have in 2 Corinthians 5, the proper condition of the Christian. First, looking, God having wrought him for it, to having, according to what was divine power in life, what was mortal swallowed up of life. Death had wholly lost its power. Next, if he died, being so wrought, and having the earnest, being absent from the body and present with the Lord, these were his living, active motives as to his walk. Thirdly, as the judgment-seat of Christ was there, the effect of this on him was (and could not be with what went before, that he was wrought for glory), not to make him look on to being manifested, but his being now manifested to God. He was in the light really, walking in it in respect of that judgment, so that all was manifested to God now, before whom he walked, in the glory (for when we appear before the judgment-seat, we shall be in the glory, and glorified, and our hearts judge everything according to the glory—so by faith, now). Then if he did think of the terror he thought of others; it woke up in his heart that love of Christ which had been shown in that which had brought him into that state, and proved all not brought in to be dead, turning it

thus downward towards those who had no part in it. A blessed state—upwards, in power over death, to God, all in perfect light—or, according to Christ's own love, downward to sinners! What a *chasid* (saint) the Christian is, as to his position, by Christ! Nor do I at all say that this latter part is in any way inferior to the other. It takes more out of self into God's own nature. As I have noted as to Philippians 2 and 3, this leads more to God, that to glory delivering from the world. Still he would win Christ. It may be a lowly thing to work out our salvation, but it is in view of God's character, and God works in us. So we are sons of God, followers of His in nature and character. So, in Psalm 16, it is Christ's taking the place of humiliation with the saints, by which he finds Jehovah's presence fulness of joy. Psalm 17 is righteousness, and glory in waking up. So, in Philippians 3, not character but righteousness. But Philippians hardly goes on to the presence of God.

Note too the character of experiences in Philippians and 2 Corinthians, and what is practically such in 1 Corinthians. I have already spoken of Philippians, but I return to it here to compare it with the others. It is as walking in the Spirit, and filled with it, being above all that Resh could suggest. Flesh and sin are not at all recognised, thought of, or named, save as once saying "no confidence in flesh," and that is religiously. Hence we find he is not insensible to trial, but, by the wings of faith above it, all distress turns to his salvation. Self is so gone, and he so blessed he does not, for self, know whether to choose life or death, only as it is better for the Church he shall stay, deciding by faith his own trial for life. Careful for nothing, only doing one thing, pressing onward to win Christ and the prize of His calling, rejoicing in the Lord always, able to do all things through Him who strengthens him. Such is experience when laid by in the power of the Spirit. It was not his present engagement in the active service in the conflict, but his rising in the power of the Spirit above it all. In 1 Corinthians we have the Christian at the other extremity. They were going on, as we know, very badly. Paul would not even go there, and deals in earnest warning and reproof. But what is his own position as to them?

Confidence in God. "Ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship (knowledge) of our Lord Jesus Christ, who also shall confirm you to the end that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. From this point he can deal with them as connected with Christ. There is a reality in being a Christian, even when going on badly, though that is *never* allowed. So in Galatians, where he stood even more in doubt of them because it touched doctrine, "I have confidence in you through the Lord."

Now in 2 Corinthians we have experimental exercised faith in the conflict; not going on badly, yet one trusting in grace for those who did, not rising on the wings of faith above all the trials, but exercise of heart finding God in them; and this too is very precious. The trials are of various kinds. First, violent persecution, so as to despair of life. He had the sentence of death in himself (this is the secret of force in trial) not to trust in self but God who raises the dead; two things, carrying the sentence of death, the Cross on self, God sending it practically, so he says further on, but it is God meeting the man in the putting down of self. This is brought out beautifully in chapter 4: troubled man, not distressed—God is there; persecuted man, not forsaken—God there; perplexed man, not in despair—God there; cast down man, not destroyed—God there. Now this is the whole matter, and then follows the spiritual mind as to it, already quoted.

Then anxieties for the Church, could not go to Corinth, could not stay at Troas, no Titus. In Macedonia, without fighting, within fears—doubted as to having sent the Epistle. God comforts those that are cast down. Poor vessel, but rich grace!

Then positive danger from flesh. He goes to the third heaven—a man in Christ there, he can glory, but flesh would glory too—a thorn comes. This he would have taken away, but looks to the Lord. It hindered his work, made his bodily presence weak, speech contemptible, tended to his being despised in preaching. But the Lord was there—flesh, self, was put down, and Christ, strength and grace came in, and he glories in the infirmity. Now all

this is power in weakness—weakness felt as to the vessel, which we need, but therein God most blessedly and graciously meeting us, and making Himself better known. It is very instructive and sweet to the soul. How gracious of God, and wonderful!

But further, in 2 Corinthians 5, in turning, after the full positive condition of the Christian, to meet the natural portion of man by the same truth of life in Christ glorified, note that death is spoken of because a Christian may die. Death is not in itself set aside; it is a gain. Judgment is not, as to the Christian, at all. We must all be manifested there to receive the things done in the body. He knows the terror of the Lord, but the only action of this on his mind is to lead him to persuade others. We are always confident if we think of death, because we are formed for the glory into which Christ has entered in the power of life, and have the earnest of the Spirit—it is, if we die, going from the burdening body and being present with the Lord. But judgment we shall never come into. We persuade others because of it—we *are* manifested to God, that is its present practical effect.

In the experiences of 2 Corinthians as in Philippians we see how the fellowship and love of the saints are ministered to, and here connected with a difference in respect of ministry—in Philippians not so, as the Apostle was shut up; a difference interesting in its character. There, “Work out your own salvation, for it is God who worketh in you”—a word important in these days; here, “Death worketh in us, but life in you.” Yet still there is the eventual working of grace, and all things, the Apostle himself, are for the Church’s, the saints’ sake.

I go back to point out that in 1 Corinthians 1, man is put down in himself. The power of God and wisdom of God is in what is foolishness for man. God’s folly is wiser than man, and things that are not bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. Then the new thing is brought in. “We are of God in Christ Jesus,” and all that clothes us and brings us into blessing is in Christ too. “Of him are ye,” i.e., of God, “in Christ Jesus,” and “He is, of God, made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification.” It is in life and

competency for blessing, and entering into all—Christ—the new thing. In chapter 2 he will know nothing else but Christ in his ministry, and that in the way it was folly to men, but in this, flesh must be put down. When a great work was to be done, he was in weakness, and fear, and much trembling, and his speech was not with persuasive words of men, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and in power.

Note also in 2 Corinthians 3 and 4 there is the having received this ministry (the glory of God in the face of Jesus), we use great plainness of speech. Having received this ministry, we faint not. The revelation of the glory, so that righteousness is in grace for us, and the glory its known place—the glory of God is in righteousness, bringing us then into it gives a ministry as open as the unveiling of the glory. But then it is in a power which, overcoming death and setting Man in glory, hinders fainting, though the vessel be an earthen one. The heart, on the contrary, carries death in this, that the power and glory may be itself, or themselves, alone.

In chapter 4, death, as the utter setting aside of man (as well as atonement in Christ) has a far more important character than we are apt to think. It judges, of course, the flesh as hopelessly bad, but it ends it. It declares, as Christ's death, that no link could be formed with man. Divine, infinite love came down, and, while divine, suited itself to every want and sorrow of man; His whole condition, because the children were in flesh and blood, "he also likewise took part of the same," but remained alone till death. Thus, His death was the solemn declaration that there could be no link between grace and flesh. Hence, as His disciple, we must hate our father, mother, wife, life—all that is a link here—to follow Him; forsake all we have. It may be outwardly, always as regards the new life. It is not in the old relationships, though it respects them as formed of God, and all God's ordinances, but in it we reckon ourselves dead, crucified with Christ—our life only a life which is of Him as risen; He, as risen, is our Life. But having taken our sins and died, they are gone, passed away with the life He laid down. Then, if we are dead with Him, we have not the

nature, as in Him, which had to do with sin, the world, law—I am not alive in it at all—I am in Christ, alive by Him as a quickening Spirit. I eat His flesh, drink His blood, realise His death, non-existence as to this world, and so abide in Him, live *dia auton* (through, by reason of, Him) as He lived *dia ton patera* (through, by reason of, the Father). How completely this sets aside the old thing! I am dead and gone as to flesh and all it had to say to. Yet, because I am alive, and this only is Christianity, I have to seek to realise it, may at first see only forgiveness by it. But except I eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, I have no life in me. If I do, I am alive in, and by reason of, and for Him. But it is death to all that was connected with nature, because of nature. No doubt it will contend against us, but we are not in it now at all. How immense and total a change is Christ's death to us! Then we have to seek, "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal body."?

I have spoken of chapter 4 as giving the realisation of Romans, our being dead to sin, and so partly of Colossians, only it goes further; but we find the Ephesians and the other half of Colossians, as to our previous state, too, in chapter 5:14. All were dead, or Christ need not have gone there. It is still practical, but not new position, but here also consequent duty. It does refer, in general terms, and necessarily, to the new Creation, but the point insisted on is the claim of Christ's death—that we should live to Him who died and rose again for us. This is analogous to Romans 6, not as dead with, indeed, and afterwards to live to God as alive in Him, but, as I have said, Christ's claim by death. We were dead, had all died—if we live (which is then a new creation) we are to live to Him who died and rose again. Still it is only life, not "quickened together with him." But it takes up the previous state, as Ephesians, and part Colossians, we were dead—not we have to die, i.e., have died to the old man, in Christ, but it puts us into the sphere of the new Creation, as a man in Christ, but it is not here, any more than Romans, "risen with Christ," and God is referred to as in Romans 6, "All things are of God, who hath

reconciled us to himself”—a new nature and state of things. Remark too how very clearly, in Colossians, the state and ground of it is laid before the walk, in each case. We *are* dead and risen—”Be not therefore subject,” etc., and “Set your affections on things above.” “Ye *are* dead, and your life hid,” etc.—”Therefore mortify your members.” “Do not lie, for ye *have* put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new,” etc. “Put on ... as the elect of God, holy and beloved.” It is a recognised principle, but the ground work of exhortation comes out singularly clearly here.

Chapter 5 is interesting too in this way: after giving the full effect of the new power of divine life in Christ, reaching to mortality being swallowed up in life, it turns and meets the whole case of the full effect of the old thing, death and judgment; death (we having life) is “absent from the body, and present with the Lord”—judgment makes us, knowing the terror of the Lord, anxious to persuade others, the love of Christ constraining us; compare John 5:24, and Hebrews 9:27. The power is in “God who raiseth the dead,” or has risen, and given us Christ risen, in this power, as Life. It is founded on His being made sin for us, we the righteousness of God in Him; the practical result is, knowing no man after the flesh—living to Him who died and rose for us, and seeking in all to be agreeable to Him. But it meets Hebrews 9:27, wholly and exactly.

Finally, note well the effect of the full operation of grace, in setting one in a new position, in the power of life in Christ, is to bring one to God. It is not natural conscience or law, but what suits God’s presence which is then in question. This gives us, mark, the true sanctifying character of grace—the effect of the full unclouded light of God on the conscience. Hence the Apostle speaks of the terror of the Lord, but note the effect—he persuades men. Any alarm to him is out of the question; he has got there, being always confident by a share with Christ in the glory which is found there. But he sees its effect on man, and persuades them (he sees it, because he has a man’s conscience, salutarily, even for himself, as to walk under the influence of this presence) but it has a wholesome and

salutary effect upon him, not of uncertainty—he is made manifest unto God; most wholesome and preserving truth! The grace then which has perfectly saved us, and brought us to God Himself, makes the presence and light of God, of Him who is Light, the measure of conscience and of right and wrong for him who is brought to be in it, and know it by grace. Nothing can be a greater proof of the perfectness of his position than that the effect of God's presence, of the terror of the Lord, was to push him to persuade others, the love of Christ constraining him; for this was the true result of all—that he was possessed of this love. God's presence, we have seen, his place by grace, and in holiness, according to glory into which he was brought; but, as to man, it told another tale. The manner of coming there, what was clear to his soul, had passed sentence of death upon all that man was, viewed in the first Adam, for the Christ of his affections, whose love he knew, had died and risen again. If he had known a Christ in association with living men, yet it had been shown there was no possible link between them. He had died for all (borne the sin which made union in the flesh impossible; when the truth had come out—what had been to his mind a Messiah, crowning joy of man in the flesh, was a dying Messiah for what was altogether dead in sin). Now he could only know Him thus—men belonged to Him, if at all, as dead and risen. They belonged to a new Creation, of which He was Head as risen. Old things were gone, all things new, all things of God who had reconciled them to Himself by Christ. Hence he knew these two things—Christ down here, not the culminating blessing of man in the flesh, and the Glory of Israel, but God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and as Man, He who knew no sin made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We know then God as Love, in Christ, towards us as sinners. That is the way we know Him, active in love, and, if the question of righteousness be raised, we are the righteousness of God in Him. Wondrous result of Christ's death! God known only as Love—ourselves God's righteousness in Christ! God in Christ

Love—man in Christ God's righteousness! It is a wondrous salvation, a divine work and wisdom.

Returning for a moment to Philippians 3, the more I read it the more clear the setting aside of the first or old man becomes. The Cross being the point of division, the resurrection, the beginning of the new, identified with the acceptance of the atonement. Knowing no man after the flesh is identified with this. Man had, with every advantage, both seen and hated both Christ and His Father—the world was judged—the Son of Man lifted up. This puts the Church too in a peculiar position, because the Man of God's counsels, the Son is not revealed till He come, "The Son of Man be come," "I will raise him up at the last day." Even if received then, this was the portion of him who did so; and the whole statement is connected with eating His flesh, and drinking His blood. Hence, too, the Cross is our portion, if we suffer with Him, for nothing is fulfilled, as yet, save the foundation work and the coming of the Holy Ghost; we are in a suspended time. But the Cross lays the basis of all. Every question of good and evil has come to an issue in it. But the first man is condemned in it—condemned but gone, for faith that is—crucified with Christ. There is an end of man morally, in every sense; judgment not executed. The second Man must take His power for that—Son of God and Son of Man; but morally man's history is closed. It was the "end of the ages." Not only "he that believeth not is condemned already," but he is found to be "dead in sins," and it is a new creation beyond death, sins, Satan's power, judgment, through redemption and a new life. Not merely quickened by Christ, but quickened together with Him out of death, where we were lying, and He came down. The basis is what God is, and God Himself, "All things of God." The Law assumed the first, living, responsible Adam. See Colossians 2 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. There is the difference of the bringing in of death, man being looked at as living in the old man, which is in the Cross, and seeing we were dead in sins, and a new creation. Romans fully develops the former. It is found also in Colossians 2; 2 Corinthians 5:14, *et seq*; and Ephesians 2 and Colossians 2:14, the latter.

Philippians 1

Le Messager Evangelique¹⁰: Meditation #98 (1896)

Two things combine in the heart of the apostle: great confidence in the salvation of the Philippians, and an ardent desire for the Spirit of Christ in them either here, in the midst of tribulations, difficulties, demonstrating the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ. We see the same desires in Col.1:3-11. This, confidence and desire, comes from what the apostle was attached to—what is found in God himself—faithfulness and love which assures the salvation and the glory of the saints. We see them in immediate relationship with God; the Spirit of God is not only the guarantee of their salvation, but also the source of their conduct. As long as the Galatians think of their salvation as to be accomplished by observing the law, the apostle does not know what to say to them, but he takes confidence to them looking to the Lord. Corinthians also offers a striking example (1:8-9). Although they were in a sorry state, the apostle trusts in God and His love, and then applies to these Christians all he knows of God. Paul was not discouraged about them because he trusted in God. He is also full of confidence in the Philippians (1:3-6), considering God's faithfulness. This fed his love; he did not see them as men, but children of God, and companions of Christ in glory.

Paul was attached to the Philippians, but he thought of God as the source of all good in them. He did not rest until he had seen in them the fruits of the Spirit and the manifestation of all that God could produce. We also want to see it in ourselves and in all brothers. The measure of what God can produce is our communion with Him. Little communion, little fruit; much communion, much desire towards all the brethren.

Paul asks that their love may abound yet more and more. The power of the Holy Spirit could produce this and dependence on the Holy Spirit maintain it. This love should abound in knowledge and all intelligence (v.9). A

¹⁰ Translated using Google

father loves his child, without spoiling it, because his love is with intelligence and discernment. Paul saw that God had led these believers in the quarry, and the terminus of their career is the day of Christ.

Not to flinch, keep not only its not, but especially his heart. Gross negligence is never the end of long internal negligence. Communion with God is the source of vigilance. Christians often simply a negative Christianity. God works in us, and we must act. Christianity is the activity of God's love: the law was the defence which is contrary to holiness. Christ actually is. The Christian should be an expression of the activity of God's love. Christ did not simply abstain from evil, he feels good. If I feel my life is from God, as I understand it must be the expression of the activity of the love of Christ. I can not be satisfied that my life is simply beyond reproach; it must be positively good. (Col.1:9-10). The measure of our actions is that we live as is fitting in the Lord, to please him in all respects. If Christ had acted according to his own will, he would not have demonstrated the principle of his life. The effect of justice is to make us grow in the knowledge of God; this knowledge puts us in touch with the unseen and makes us grow (Col.1:11).

Think of God as the source of all that we do; that our life is the manifestation of the activity of God's love; it manifests the life of Christ. Let us satisfied by producing what we can conceive of the activity of Christ. The enjoyment of a relationship makes us act according to that relationship. If I'm with my father, I act in this relationship. There is no doubt that he is my father; I do not argue about what it is; I enjoy it, and every day I talk to him. The result was to make me feel that I am neither myself nor the world, but in Christ, redeemed by him and transported at great cost to his kingdom.

Philippians 1—Christian Experience

Le Messenger Evangelique¹¹: Meditation #266 (1959)

The Spirit of God describes us in this Epistle Christian experience, and makes us see in the Apostle consciousness of absolute superiority over all the circumstances and all the difficulties, since the new birth through the end of the race. There is the battle with Satan himself, but turns salvation because God is above all. The Christian experience is the introduction of the divine in the midst of evil power: we need to realize it more. It is the consciousness that he has not achieved what everyone has to work out his own salvation, and it is good to know not to be lightweight. If we were true we would we also conscious of being above the circumstances.

Two things are at the root of this struggle for the Christian.

First we are not our own. Self-will, any personal action, is an injury to God. Christian was bought for: if he does something for himself, he distanced himself from the Christian base.

Secondly, our hearts are temples of the Holy Spirit.

These are the two main bases of the Christian life (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

This is because it is the Christian experience in the Epistle to the Philippians, Paul always uses the word salvation in the direction of the final issue, the entrance into glory: "We expect the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who will transform the body of our humiliation into conformity to the body of his glory" (Phil.3:21.) "I do not believe myself to have apprehended", that is, say I do not believe I have reached the goal, "but one thing I do ... I on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14).

"It is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (2:13). In Exodus 17:16 we read: "The Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to

¹¹ Translated using Google

generation.” This is Israel, but enforcement remains true even now. God can work in the believer so that evil will run down. It’s not that there is no flesh and the Christian does not need a splinter, and it is still true that the flesh should be subdued in a practical and moral sense. The Christian experience is precisely the experience of divine power in the believer, so that the flesh is not: it is the only thing that God recognizes as a Christian experience. “For me to live is Christ and to die is gain ...; but if I have to live...it is well worth it...” (1:21-22). Satan is undoubtedly there and fight; but even that I “turn to salvation.” Some preach Christ out of envy and a spirit of contention; Paul is in prison, they think it’s a good opportunity for the opposition.—Well! anyway, says Paul, I am glad, because Christ is preached. What can we do to a man who is only an instrument in the hand of God who directs all? “All things are yours” Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:23. Christ won a complete victory; the evil no longer has any power against someone who follows Him, he fled. Christ has measured this power and, having destroyed, finished with her.

The verses 27-28 of chapter 1, we read: “Fighting together with one mind, with the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries ... which ... is a demonstration ... your salvation, and that from God. “It is those that are justified; God is there for them. Paul had been in prison for four years. In his absence he wrote to the Philippians, “Work out your own salvation ... it is God who works in you both to will and to do” (2:18). Satan does not come into play. Paul was an active spirit, energetic, already before conversion; it is even more so after his conversion. He sees arise opponents while in prison, chained to a soldier for years, “Rejoice always,” he wrote. He could not speak and if he had not got the best of everything and himself. “God leads us in triumph,” he said to the Corinthians (2 epistle, 2:14). God had comforted when he was shot, he knew Him better now, and it can repeat: “Rejoice always in the Lord.”

Note what he writes in ch.1, v.19-20: “For I know that this will turn out to my salvation ... according to my earnest expectation and hope that I shall be ashamed in anything,

but that with all boldness, even now as always Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death"—by life, yes, we understand; but death? Is that going to trial before Nero, a persecutor of Christians. That's when the Apostle writes: "For me to live is Christ," and if I die, I'll Christ. I do not know what to choose. It was such a joy on both sides! What is the consequence? His happiness is so great, it feels being such grace that he is rid of selfishness and free to think of others. And trial? It decides itself (v.24-25.) So there is no doubt of the love of Christ for the Church. For this update of total side of me, he could see and decide all things, having the clean and simple look. This is not resignation, but what superiority over all! Love in office gave him a happiness that left me completely out. That is the Christian experience, divine life in man kept above circumstances while the feeling. Christ, Himself, has felt more than anyone. But here is a man living the life of God and the protester: this is achieved by carrying in the body the death in a spiritual and moral sense, if it is the circumstances that affect us. Paul says elsewhere that he wore around his body the death of Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:10). So in this first chapter of this epistle, we took care to judge a man who had in himself the sentence of death (2 Cor. 1: 9). If it is to be condemned, he is very happy; if he live, he is very happy: it is for him a well in both cases. Someone will say it was particularly Paul; he had also made progress.—But if God had not been for him, he would not have made such progress. The experiences guaranteed him the possibility of a similar experience for any Christian. When he was weak then he was strong (2 Cor. 12:10). When are we really weak? This is when we believe strong, and we forget that we are weak. We have available to us the grace that is sufficient for the position we find ourselves. It is God who works in us both to will and to do; "Working with fear and trembling." If we feel the presence of God in the fight against the enemy, we will act with fear and trembling, not lightly. But it is not to be afraid of God. It is God who works in us. Satan is opposing; and if there is the activity of the flesh, he took the opportunity; if we stand for dead, he will have no hold on us. In three days

Paul learned this lesson. Before his conversion was his own righteousness which made him an enemy of Christ. He had a good conscience, he was blameless as to the law, but he was a bitter enemy of Christ. There was in him not a single cause, no single movement, even the most beautiful, not a single thing that was not exposed by the sight of Christ, it was a complete change. We need Christ. All that exalts us is a loss as to the love of Christ. That's when all that is in our heart is placed in front of our consciousness with the light of God we find that everything is sin because it hides us Christ: we need Christ instead of me, we need a justice divine. This work is required to God that after, it may be useful. Satan knows that our ego can not fight against him. We can say that Satan had his claws sunk into the heart of Paul.

The discovery that all my sin is forcing us to seek God's justice. Thus the Christian who held me as his sin, may, prepaid serve in combat. This was done in a quick manner in Paul. For us, or Christ is our pattern, or is it our selves: there is no middle ground.

Now we read: "Be anxious for nothing" (4:6). Is not exceed the circumstances? May God preserve us from indifference; but it says: "Present your requests to God ...". Is it that God is concerned? He is taking care of us. It helps us get through the circumstances: tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope. We see a lot clearer in the things of heaven when we're a little broken on the ground. God pursues us when we are wrong; He does not let us. I guess you confiez me your children but if they do not behave themselves I give you. God does not do so; He does not let us chastises those He loves.

"In everything let your requests to God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving .." (4: 6). What is the consequence? The peace of God will keep our hearts, a peace that surpasses all understanding. If we have easy circumstances, fine, blessed be God! It is only natural then that we can experience peace. But in overwhelming circumstances, the peace of God keeps our hearts, it is this peace that passes all understanding! The big circumstance is God. There are positive difficulties shots, hazards,

hunger, thirst, sinking (2 Corinthians 11:25 ET Philippians 4: 11-13). Well! Paul said, I found that Christ always enough for me; I have learned to be content in all circumstances. I'm everywhere, I'm glad all over. Here is a man who can do everything that supports everything that is joyful in all. As for sin, God is glorified, Paul no longer lives there; about everything else, this Christian is happy.

Do you know what it is that friend? You do not know if you have not been in distress, when the heart is injured, wrinkled. The Christian knows that the earth: Christ Himself has suffered and the part of Judas, Peter. It is there that Christ is showing that He is always himself, always divine, always perfect. Whether the carpenter, or advertised as the Son of God, still firm when necessary, at the same time gentle as a lamb, it is started by anything on earth: that is Christ . Here too, Paul, Christian. Here we have a man subject to like infirmities than us, but in ordinary things as in great things, he was still living Christ, who was in him. The activity produced by him who worketh to will and to do is search for Christ. The flesh remains, the struggle continues, God help us in the fight.

But is it that there is in us the net eye? This is the eye that has no purpose other than Christ, so that the heart is not shared. It is not perfection in the absence of the flesh; is perfection in the consciousness of the death sentence on the flesh and the power of God's life in us. Ineffable happiness, peace that surpasses all understanding!

God gives us, for it is the secret of it, to look to Christ! It is; He gave himself for us in his death, and thinking about everything, He does everything for his beloved sheep.

Philippians 2—Thoughts

Bible Treasury, vol.4 p.316 [1863]

Collected Writings, vol.27, p.215

Philippians 3 presents the energy of life and of the Spirit of God in the Christian running toward the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that he might win Christ. In chapter 2 we find the display of the gracious affections. But in order to this, the Spirit of God fixes our minds upon Christ looked at in this humble condition, or rather when He humbled Himself. It is beautiful, the way in which, toward the end of the chapter, without an effort, we find the apostle's feelings were all drawn out—the spirit elevated really above the circumstances, but free to unfold itself in gracious affections in the midst of them all. And that is just what the Christian ought to be, having Christ as his one object, the power of the Holy Ghost raising him above all around him, that there should be the display of Christ towards all around him. The Christian's life here ought to be the manifestation of Christ in the midst of the world. For this we must be in constant communion with the source of it. The Christian's life as such down here is the display of Christ's life. It is the life of Jesus manifested in his mortal body.

The Philippians had sent to the apostle to help him, when in prison, with a supply of what he needed. His heart had been touched, and he felt the kindness and love. But while owning it, his heart turns to think of them. The Spirit of life in Christ is at work in him, and he immediately thinks of their things. He is comforted of them and can say, "I know how to abound and to suffer need." I am rejoicing that I can get the blessing from you: but the consequence is that it turns back towards them. He says, "If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

If the love of Christ is in our hearts, the consequence is that things acquire a character entirely different. They had sent to the apostle what he wanted, and he says there is consolation in Christ. It is not merely the things he got,

but the comfort of Christ and fellowship of the Spirit. It was the working of the spirit of grace in Jesus, shewing itself in this fellowship. He says, If you want me to be perfectly happy, go on well among yourselves. There were some little jealousies at work, such things as do spring up amongst Christians; but he takes occasion, by owning all the grace that was in them, to say, "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." And one just sees how these gracious affections are drawn out and in exercise, where the heart, in the power of the Spirit of God, is carried beyond the things which act on the flesh. His heart turns to Christ as the expression of this. He says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves." Now if we are not very near Christ, that is often very difficult. We may see great vanity or pride in another, and one may be going on really better than this or that person. I do not mean that the other may be positively sinning; but I may feel that he is not walking spiritually. Yet, if I am practically close to Christ myself, I see my brother in Christ, and then it is not hard to estimate others better than myself. Where I am walking in nearness to Christ, if there is anything consciously wrong in myself, this is what I feel about and not my goodness.

The best thing is not to be thinking about myself at all, but to have the sense of my own nothingness, which we always have when we are near the Lord. I feel my nothingness in the presence of Christ. But if I look at my brother, I see Christ in him—not his faults. If we are thus close to the Lord, it is natural to esteem others better than ourselves. We judge ourselves in His presence; but we see the workings of Christ in our brother. The thing that is before us in our brother is Christ. See the amazing privilege of the Christian. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The state here is the fruit of the energy which is brought before us in chapter 3. There he was counting all as dross and dung, and pressing on toward the mark. That is supposed here, and he says, "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

In this passage we get the complete and absolute contrast

of all that was in the first Adam and in the flesh now. You are to have the same mind as there was in Christ, looked at from the time that He was in the glory till He came down to the cross. That is what governed all His path from the divine glory down to this nothingness of death, “the dust of death,” as it is called. You are to have the same mind as He had all that pathway. And you will see what it is here.

It is a wonderful thing to see that we are called upon to have the same mind which was in Christ Jesus. It is from having His nature,” who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation.” If we look at the first Adam, it was exactly the opposite. He was in the form of man, in the condition of man, and he did set about, as a robbery, to be equal with God. He took it in order to get into this place, to exalt himself; and he was abased. Whereas Christ abased Himself, and He is exalted. It is not only that He appears, but He abases Himself. “He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” Then there was a second step in this humiliation. “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” There is nothing so humble as obedience, because we have then no will of our own at all. Adam, besides setting up to be God, was disobedient unto death; whereas Christ, on the contrary, was obedient unto death, as a matter of sorrow and pain. He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

The thing that I find in Christ exactly opposed to the first Adam and to our flesh is that He humbled Himself—emptied Himself. First, He made Himself of no reputation, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. You see it is not merely bearing wrongs—this He did most really. But there is another thing here—perfect love. It was this that brought Him down. He came into the place of obedience, and it was through perfect love to others who wanted it. For love likes to serve; selfishness likes to be served, and thinks itself exalted when other people are waiting upon it. Love likes to serve; and that is what Christ always will do. He

will never give it up. He served when He was down here upon the earth. "I am among you as he that serveth." Wretched hearts they had to enter into it! Knowing that He was come from God and went to God, He girds Himself, pours water into a basin and begins to wash the disciples' feet. This is what He is doing now; He is washing our feet; He is servant in that sense still. It is His glory really—the glory of His love towards us.

And when the time comes, it is the same thing. He tells them to be as men that wait for their Lord. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." The Lord thus presented Himself in this wonderful way as taking the form of a servant—His ear bored. It was not there His becoming a man; but when He had served the seven years perfectly, He says, I will not go out free. He remains a servant for ever. He might have had twelve legions of angels and gone out free; but that is not what He came for. **He said, I will be a servant for ever.**

That is the very thing which Christ all through His path has done. Leaving God in the glory, leaving the form of Godhead in abeyance, He became a servant for the blessing of others. We have got the blessing now and the glory; and the way you shew that, is by serving now in that spirit of love that thinks everyone better than oneself, and serves everybody. In the presence of Christ selfishness disappears, and blessed holy affections flow forth without difficulty. I am not thinking of myself. I see what is blessed and good in another, and this is the energy that overcomes all difficulties. Christ humbled Himself: God, therefore, has highly exalted Him, and "given him a name which is above every name," etc.

In verse 13, it is God working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. We have by grace, God as the worker in us of this willing and doing. That is what is displayed in our life. It shewed itself in Christ by His coming down and humbling Himself, and now He says God is working in you the same mind, to will and to do of His good pleasure. You are to be blameless and harmless; that is

what Christ was. You are actually manifested down here as Christ was. Did He not shine as the light? That is what you are. He was the word of life, and He was holding it forth; and He says, that is what you are to do too—"holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain." Just see how all these affections come out. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." It was really manifesting Christ to them.

He was there a prisoner, perhaps going to be put to death; but "I joy and rejoice with you all." Your faith is what I look at as a precious sacrifice; you are going to be in glory with Christ: and if I am offered up, it is for that very reason; I am offered on your faith. The offering was their faith. He says, as it were, I throw myself in, that we may rejoice together. We are all going to heaven in company. He is looking at Christ having these saints, and he is helping them. "For the same cause [he adds] also do ye joy and rejoice with me." What! rejoice when he was going to be put to death! Looking at the blessedness in Christ, he rises above it all.

But we see the same affections coming out still. Even in common things, he cannot be happy till he knows their state. "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." I cannot rest perfectly happy till I know that all is well with you all. "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state." It is not that he could trust others for the same love, but it was in him. "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." But still he rests in Timothy. "But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he has served with me in the gospel." It is still the same blessed happy feeling. Timothy's affection, too, is brought out. Paul knew that the Philippians would care about him, so he says Timothy shall come and tell you.

"Yet I supposed it necessary to send unto you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants." Thus he links them all in one. "For he

longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick." The Philippians had heard that he had been sick, and Epaphroditus felt they would be all miserable because of this. How he reckons upon their love! He was full of heaviness, not because of his own sickness, but because they had heard of it. It is the present flowing out of affection. "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him: and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." What a sorrow it would have been to me, if you had lost this blessed servant of Christ through serving me! "I sent him therefore the more carefully that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful." How all these gracious, blessed affections are drawn out where this mind of Christ is! Look at Christ Himself. "With desire," He says, "I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He was about to suffer; He was going to work the work of redemption. Still His soul was always bright instead of being oppressed. Even when He wanted for the last time to have the paschal supper with them. "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you." It was not to be again. Think of the amount of lowliness, as well as love, that comes out in this affection. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." It cannot be unless we are near to Christ, because the wretched flesh rises and is anxious about itself. But where the soul has, as the single thing before it, the desire to honour Christ, the life of Christ is set free in displaying Christ in the world; and then all these blessed affections are in full play. What do we learn in Christ? He was always going down. We are elevated because we are in Christ. But we are to have the same "mind"; and the way that this shews itself is in self-humbling and in obedience, This sets free all the Christian affections, because Christ has set me free from self.

May we so feed upon Him, and have Him for our object, and enter into His spirit, that we may have the mind of Christ, and shew Him forth in the world!

Philippians 2
15 July 1868¹²

Le Messenger Evangelique¹³: Meditation #197 (1913)

Christian experience is the subject of this epistle. It describes in detail the path of Christian living in the power of God's Spirit. We see, as it were, the model; there is no uncertainty, but perfect trust in God. The power of the Spirit of God in the midst of evil, our relationship with Him, are never presented as weakened. It emphasizes that we need to learn, that is to say, the entire setting aside of *me*.

Ch.2 presents the lowly man on earth; Ch.3 the glorified man at God's right hand. Ch.2 highlights what forms our character here, not Christ *ascended*, but Christ *descended*. Both chapters we deploy the life of God in us. The mere thought of Paul, ch.3, is that it is the way to glory; he has no difficulties; He believes all things as rubbish, in order to gain Christ. Indeed, when the eye is fixed on him, there is no difficulty. No running in a race keeping his coat on the body, and, for the prize, the simple requirement is to have the goal (Christ) before the eyes, and not to look away.

Ch.2, the core is modelled on him. We find no glory that attracts us, as in ch.3; but Christ that we must know the mind to walk through this world. This knowledge judge *me* and product conformity and complete likeness to him.

All we have at the moment in this world, is rolling out the goodness in the midst of evil. The fall of man is general; evil has never been recovered—but I know another man, the Lord Jesus Christ. The first man is in complete ruin; the second man in his full glory. The first man is absolutely good for nothing; but God introduced into the scene where the man is the fullness of the blessing, and no fall can break a bond formed by the power of God. Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in

¹² JND was in Dublin in July. Lett.2:526

¹³ Translated using Google

Christ Jesus our Lord. The darkness around us are just a touch of sparkle to a light, the grace that God has brought to the stage. Paul said: If you want to make my joy fulfilled, all have the same thought, and grace he puts in this exhortation! We need the power of God to work in our hearts in order to produce the mind of Christ. The *ego* can not stand next to her; must be done with him. The first man was disobedient unto death; the second man, we find precisely the opposite. The first man is lifted up, the second was lowered. The *ego* loves to be served, *love likes to serve*. Are we always this place? Christ took it and like the Hebrew servant, he “will always” (Exodus. 21). It is in this capacity that he is now busy washing the feet of his disciples, having girded to serve them. He urges us to do the same (John 13), but it remains the first great, holy and perfect example of service. He continued to go *downhill* from the glory of God to the cross. Where do we find traces of *me* in his example?

Look to Christ; contemplate it, nourish us with him in his humiliation; we will be trained on his character. We will see in our brothers, and so it will not difficult for us to estimate above ourselves (v.4). If the love of Christ in my heart, I see all that is good in others, and *I* will be completely lost.

Another feature of the trail is Christian *obedience*. Christ became obedient unto death, even death on a cross (v.8). What characterizes the new man is always dependence and obedience, “Behold, I come, he said to do, O God, thy will.” The obedience of Christ was to be the will of God as the sole object and only reason. His obedience was ongoing. That must be our own; nothing should put obstacles in our thoughts, the all-sufficiency of God, under any circumstances we were. The *word of God* is the guide and the food that feeds the new man. Remove it, there is nothing left; there is no truth in the world without the written word. Christ is the living Word.

(v.12-14).—Paul was absent; this, he worked for the Philippians; now, they had only to continue the fight, but God was still with them. If we rely completely on Him, there can never be a barrier that makes us turn back; for it is impossible that God can not continue its intentions in

his saints. "It is He who works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (v.13).

(v.15-16).—The Christian being down here in the path of grace, *I* shall always lower. I repeat: love likes to serve. To glorify Christ, we must not ignore ourselves. Our position here below is solemn: we are clothed the character of Christ through this world—this crooked and perverse generation—despite the efforts of Satan to make us walk according to the flesh. Every Christian, if in good condition, that is to say, not thinking point itself, is an epistle of Christ.

Our march is it that of Christ when he was here? Do we remember that we were bought with a price? Look to Christ: he went, always downward. He started the nursery, for he would hold any place in the world. Where would he find one? If the world is separated from God, which way can we go? Hers was to be no place to lay his head; the world was a desert for him and us, we must follow through the desert.

This is the true secret of Christ; we must learn from Him, as Mary sat at his feet and heard his word. Would you like the world you Honorat and regardât you with respect, or would you prefer he look like he was watching your Lord? Be much in his company, and you will be like him in some measure, no matter under what circumstances. He never thought of himself. See him on the cross, thinking of his mother; in the garden, healing the ear of a slave. He even gave himself time to eat, rest, take care of him? We never have any excuses if we let our *ego* reappear; because if we were usually with Christ, the flesh would lift the head spot. May our hearts always attach more to Him alone!

Philippians 2

Miscellaneous Writings, vol.4 p.218

Truth for the Last Days #3. Dublin, June 1873

We get here how the Lord humbled Himself, and associated us with Himself according to the counsels of God.

The Deity of the Lord Jesus is the basis of everything for our souls. Without it God could not be known to us. Who could leave His place but a Divine Person? I say that because I desire this evening to speak of His humanity, that brings Him specially near to our souls, and enables Him to associate us with Himself. It is His human place I speak of. It inspires our hearts with confidence. "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead *bodily* that is the reality of humanity. "Though he were a Son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered (Heb. 5: 8). He understands it all as having gone through it. He never gives up the place in which He has associated us with Himself. He has set Himself apart in the glory that all that is divine may be presented to us in a Man—in Christ—and thus win the affections. He never gives it up nor will give it up.

There are several other passages to which I desire to refer, to show the reality of His having become a Man. But first I refer to verses 12 and 13, because they present a difficulty to some. "Work out your own salvation" is often taken as contracting our work with God's. It is a simple blunder. They had lost the Apostle, now they must do for themselves. If they had lost Paul, had they lost God? No: that is just what they had not. It is our part in contrast with Paul's, not in contrast with God. The effect is to produce in Christians exactly the character of Christ. Verses 14 to 16 are word for word a description of what Christ was in this world. We are set to be practically what Christ was in it.

Now I turn to speak of the humiliation. Just by meditating on what He is we become like Him. The great starting point of all this wonderful truth is Proverbs viii., where Christ is spoken of as the wisdom and power of God before the world was. Before ever the world existed it was

man, not angels, that was His delight and the object of the testimony of His grace in redemption. The delight—predilection of God (speaking reverently)—was in man.

All that God is morally has been brought out in redemption—holiness, majesty, love. “It became God ... to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings. Now that was first expressed in incarnation. The redemption work was necessary to bring us into the enjoyment of it. “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” Perfect love was there in the presence of perfect evil—that which is not in heaven. There is no evil to bring out patience there. We can therefore follow Him step by step and learn God: thus only angels can see Him. There is spiritual power by grace to contemplate and feed upon it. God prepares the body for Him, and He says, in free love, “Lo I come to do Thy will O God.”

Now I turn to Luke 2. It is sweet to see the perfect unjealous glorifying of God in these angelic and holy beings. All Christian doctrines are facts, so that the Simplest can understand better than the wisest because he does not reason about it. “Glory to God in the highest, peace upon earth, good pleasure in man. Heaven itself is celebrating this wonderful thing that is proved by Christ becoming a Man. If you go to an inn it is a kind of epitome of the world: they look at you, scan you, and assign you your place. There was no place for Christ. He began in the manger and finished on the Cross, and had nowhere to lay His head all the way along. The moment He takes that place, man can deal with God so to speak, and refuse Him any place. In the end of the chapter the Lord was in perfect submission—Son of God—but entirely subject. He does nothing at all until called out—what a lesson for us (verse 51).

In Matthew 3 we see Him take this public place. He was that “Holy thing born of the virgin Mary, called the Son of God. God was changing everything, bringing God and man face to face. It was not a law to see how man could stand before Him at a future day of judgment, but God come to man as he is. God comes as a present thing in the heart and conscience. God and man are thus face to face whenever a soul is converted. Just as I am God meets

me—perfect light showing me what I am—and then all perfectly settled. And it is perfect grace.

It is no question of the law here—they were condemned already. The kingdom was going to be set up, and the people go to be baptized of John in Jordan confessing their sins. “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. He needed no repentance. I trust I need not say that here, yet He does go there doing His Father’s will. “Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” He enters by the door taking His place among those in whose hearts God’s Spirit and Word had wrought. At the first step He says, I must go with them. Then man is put into his proper place. I am speaking of Christ now. Redemption was needed to put us into it. The way it was shown that His delight was with the sons of men, was by His Son going there. The Lord came thus among these godly ones, and heaven is opened. Four times we find heaven opened. Here He comes among these poor things, who, when God came claiming good, had only the confession of none. The Father owns Him as Son, and the Holy Ghost seals and anoints Him. It is a wonderful passage bringing out the whole Trinity. The Son is there. The Holy Ghost descends upon Him in the form of a dove. The Father’s voice is heard; and all brought out in connection with the Son become a Man, taking man’s place according to the thoughts of God’s delight. Redemption was needed to put us into it. By it He can say, I have brought you into my own place.

I get the sweet and blessed truth there of His coming there as Man, taking man’s place according to God. What is the next step? We have first His place, ours with the Father and God. Is there no other place? In the world I mean? Yes: with the devil. Perfect obedience has brought Him where sin brought us (Matt. 4: 1). We have to do with Satan, Christ makes our place: as to all the difficulties of our path, He puts Himself into them and passes through them “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” He meets Satan as we have to meet him, only Satan is overcome now. The first two temptations are the wiles of Satan, the third is open iniquity. Let me say a few

words on the details. There is no harm in taking food when hungry. but Satan comes to tempt Him to command. He says I came to obey. That is the obedience we are sanctified to. Did He have His own will and God stop Him in it? Never! Here when everything depended on it—when He was in all the sorrows of the wilderness—for the Son of God a single word was sufficient, and for the devil too. The power and authority of the Word of God was shewn when everything depended upon it. There is another thing, confidence in *order* to obey. That was where Eve failed. “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” Tempting is distrusting Him; people say it is when you are trusting Him too much! There is entire confidence to enable me to do His will. The last thing was the world (verse 8). The devil shews Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. Alas, a little thing often turns off our hearts. He makes our place with the Father, and gives us next the power of our path with Satan, and in the world, serving us as love delights to serve (selfishness wants to be served). You might say that is all over now that He is in glory. John 13 shews us the contrary. He had been with them in gracious love and condescension, He is going back, as the unsullied One, to the Father getting all things into His hands, but do not think He has given up serving you. With all His glory in sight, just going out to the Father He says, “I cannot stay down here with you in the world, I will not give you up, but I must make you fit to have a part with Me where I am going. You are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you, but you will be picking up dirt by the way; that will not do for heaven.” When it comes to communion I cannot have an idle thought in my heart that does not hinder it. He washes our feet. That is His present service for us in glory. It was not because Peter repented that Christ interceded, but because Christ interceded that Peter repented. There is no excuse for defiled feet. There is not one of us that does not fail here, and the type of the Red Heifer figures it. Your failure gave Christ the Cross. That is what makes sin so horrid. There was only one place where He was alone when He had become a Man—the Cross.

Philippians 2—The Effect of Christ Down Here

Bible Treasury, vol.9 p.371[1873]

Collected Writings, vol.27, p.221

The whole of this epistle contains very little doctrine (doctrine being just alluded to in chapter 3); but it gives us, in a remarkable manner, the experience of a Christian life in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is full of blessing in that character—the life above seen down here in a man through the power of the Spirit of God. So much is this the case that the very word “sin” is not found in it. When he speaks of justification and righteousness, it is not in contrast with sin, but rather with human and legal righteousness. The flesh was there. At the very time Paul wrote the epistle he had got the thorn in the flesh to prevent it from acting; but we see in him one rising above the flesh and all hindrances, that Christ might be magnified in him. Whether to live or die, he did not know; he would have liked to be gone, but in love to the church he says, Better for you to remain; and so, counting upon Christ and knowing it is better, he knows he will remain. He knows how to abound and how to suffer need; he is pressing towards the mark for the prize—it is the only thing he has to do.

The graciousness of a Christian is in chapter 2, the energy in chapter 3, the absence of care in chapter 4; but it is all by the power of the Spirit of God. It is well for us to lay it to heart. We are the epistle of Christ known and read of all men—an epistle written not in stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart. We are set as Christians to be a letter of recommendation of Christ before the world. Yet it gives us the fullest and blessedest confidence towards God if we take that ground; for, if we are in the presence of the world for God, Christ is in the presence of God for us. His work has perfectly settled that question, and He is every moment appearing in the presence of God for us.

We are loved as He is loved. In every shape in which we can look at it, all is a fixed settled thing according to the counsels of God in grace; it is in a poor earthen vessel, but our relationship is settled, all that belonged to the old man cleared away, and all that belongs to Christ, the new Man,

our positive portion. Not only are our debts paid, but we are to be conformed to the image of His Son, and He has obtained for us the glory which is His own. "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them." He has given Himself on the cross to meet what we were, and He has obtained for us all that He has. This is the way Christ gives—not as the world. If the world gives, they have it not any longer; but Christ never gives in that way—never gives away, but brings us into all He has. If I light up one candle by another, I lose nothing of the first; and such is the way He gives. I speak of blessed principles. "My peace I give unto you" and "that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves." "The words thou hast given me I have given them" and "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them." He became a Man on purpose to bring us as men into the same glory as Himself. That relationship we are brought into already. "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." If I look at righteousness and holiness, I am as He is; if at the Son, I am before the Father as a son; and, as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall bear the image of the heavenly.

The work that entitles us to this is absolutely and totally finished. The Spirit makes us first feel our need in order to our possessing it, but the work is finished. In order to get our path clear, we must see where He has brought us. I cannot expect anyone to behave as my child, if he is not my child: you must be in the place before you have the conduct suited to that place, or be under the obligations which belong to it; and it is this last part I desire to look at a little here to-night. "You hath he reconciled," not brought half-way: as to relationship, brought into Christ. That is all. Through the work of the cross He put away our sins, and when He had done it, He sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. He finished the work which His Father gave Him to do; and in Hebrews the Spirit contrasts Christ's work with that work of the priests which was never finished, so that they never sat down.

We are perfect as pertaining to the conscience. A blunder often made is confounding perfection as to our state with perfection as to our conscience. When once we have

understood the work of Christ, we are perfect as regards the conscience. If I look up to God, I can have no thought of His ever imputing sin to me again, or I could not have peace with God; and this is so true that it is said, if this work was not perfectly done, Christ must suffer again. But He cannot drink that dreadful cup again, the very thought of which made Him sweat great drops of blood. If there is any sin still to be put away (I speak now of believers), Christ must suffer again, and this can never be. God has set Him at His right hand as having finished the work: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; now, O Father, glorify thou me." He will deal with His enemies, no doubt, when He rises up in judgment; but, as to believers, He is sitting down because He has no more to do. I am not speaking now, of course, of the daily grace He ministers to them. It is settled, and settled with this double aspect that, the purpose of God being to bring us into the same glory as His Son, the work of Christ not only cleared away our guilt but obtained that glory for us. We have not got it yet; but the work which is our title to it is finished, though we have not yet the glory to which it is our title. We are anointed and sealed with the Spirit, and He is the earnest of our inheritance. We are to the praise of the glory of His grace, but not yet to the praise of His glory, which will be when He comes the second time to bring us into the glory which His work obtained for us when He came the first time. And our life stands between the two—the cross and the glory.

We are here in this world, beloved friends, in the midst of temptations, snares, and difficulties, everything around us tending to draw us away; but the power of God is in us. We know that we are sons of God, though the world knows us not. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The practical effect of beholding the glory of God is to change us into the same image.

When Moses came down from the mountain, they were afraid to look in his face, because the law required what they had not to give; but now I see the glory which

excels—the glory in Christ, which is infinitely brighter. But the glory in the face of Jesus Christ is the witness that all my sins are put away. That which shone in the face of Moses required what man ought to have been as a child of Adam, but it came to man who was a sinner. It required righteousness, and pronounced a curse if it were not there. Now I see it in the face of Him who bore my sins in His own body on the tree. The Christian sees the Man who died for his sins now in the glory as Man, a witness that the work is done, and a testimony to the place unto which He is bringing us; and, meanwhile, we have the testimony of the Holy Ghost that our souls may be perfectly clear as to this.

That is where the believer is set, resting in entire confidence upon the efficacy of the work of Christ, and on the other hand, waiting for God's Son from heaven, converted for this: "Ye yourselves as men who wait for their Lord." Standing here is perfect liberty, for where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.

And here we have the proper experience of a Christian as led by the Spirit of God. We have in chapter 3 a Christian as to his walk, Christ having laid hold of him for that; as in 2 Corinthians 5, "He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing," etc. He has wrought us for that, not only cleared our sins. He sees Christ in glory before him (Paul had really seen Him there), and that was what he was going to get. "This one thing I do ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." What he was doing was to win Christ. He had not yet obtained Him, or got into glory; but it was the only thing he was doing in the world: his whole life was that.

In chapter 2, on the other hand, Christ is looked at, not as going up to glory, but as coming down to the cross; and here we see the graciousness of His character. By this our hearts and affections are won, and we are formed into the likeness of this graciousness. And thus we have the two great things that govern the Christian: the glory that is before him, and the grace that has been shewn him.

One word as to verses 12, 13: "Not as in my presence only," etc. Often this "fear and trembling" is used to cast a

doubt upon our relations with God. Yet it is not this we have to fear about. But we are in the midst of temptations, everything around us, the power of Satan distracting and turning the heart from Christ; and he presses upon them that, now he is absent, they must take care. He had worked for them when he was with them, he had met the craft of the enemy in wisdom and apostolic power; but he was in prison when he wrote this. He says, "Therefore, now, you must fight for yourselves"; but this is in contrast with his fighting for them; and they were to do it, for it was GOD that worked in them. The contrast is between (not God and man working, but) Paul and the Philippians. God it was who did work in them, if Paul were there; and, if they had lost Paul, God who wrought in them was still there.

But, then, what a solemn thing for us, beloved friends, if we have the sense of this, that we are left down here to make good our path to glory against Satan and all the difficulties of the way! It is enough to make us grave. A false step will throw me into the snares of Satan. I have to be serious; I have the promise of being kept, but I need to be serious.

I have spoken of the finished work, but there is another thing that exercises us: how far can we look at the flesh and say we have done with it? And this is where the practical difficulty comes, if you are in earnest and desiring to walk in fellowship with the Father and the Son: I ought never to walk after the flesh. The existence of the flesh does not give me a bad conscience, but if I allow it to act, it does. Whenever I let even an evil thought in, communion is interrupted. It is not that the flesh is gone as a matter of fact; not that there is nothing in us which Satan can tempt, but there is power in us not to let it act. The flesh is not changed. The word is as plain as ever it can be as to what the flesh is. If left to itself, it becomes so bad that God had to destroy the world. Noah, saved out of the old world, gets drunk. The law is given, and the flesh is not subject to it. Christ comes in grace, and the flesh crucifies Him. The Holy Ghost is given, and the flesh lusts against it; and we get the case of one in the third heaven, and the flesh ready to puff him up. The flesh could not be

mended, but he gets a thorn in it. But that is no reason why I should ever let it act; it never ought.

Scripture does not speak of our being conformed to Christ here; it says we are to walk as He walked. But the place of conformity to Christ is the glory, and “he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself”; that is to say, he is not pure, he has not attained. The place where I shall be like Christ is in glory. He has obtained it for me; and then, my eye looking upon Him by faith, I am changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.

I find this the great truth which Scripture does give me: not only that Christ died for my sins, but that I died with Christ. In the Epistle to the Romans, in the first part, you get all the sins dealt with, the great truth of Christ being substituted for us on the cross—bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, He is delivered for our offences; and, in the subsequent part taken up, the question is, not of sins, but of sin—not the fruit but the tree, and we are shewn not to be in the flesh if the Spirit of Christ is in us.

I do not live by the life of Adam, but by the life of Christ; and this is where the total difference is for the Christian. But it is not only that I have a new life as quickened by Christ, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, nor that He has been crucified for me so that my guilt is removed, but I am crucified with Christ.

In Colossians we read, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God”—therefore dead in this world. This is God’s declaration of our state as Christians. In Romans, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” “In that he died, he died unto sin ... wherefore reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God (not in Adam, but) through (or in) Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is faith’s estimate of it, and this is where you find real deliverance and freedom from the bondage of sin. It is “no condemnation,” not to them whose sins Christ bore, but “to them that are in Christ Jesus.” God condemned sin in the flesh; He did not forgive it, He condemned it. If I get the law, it condemns me; but Christ—does He condemn

me? No; for He has taken the condemnation for me, and in Him God has condemned sin in the flesh, and I reckon myself dead because it was in death He did so. Christ's death is, as all that He has wrought, available to me; and therefore I reckon myself dead. In 2 Corinthians we get the carrying this out in practice; "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in your mortal bodies." And then he speaks of the exercises which God sends for our good, to test this realisation in us and make it effectual: "Alway delivered unto death," etc. We all fail for want of watchfulness, but that is what our life ought to be.

Suppose I have got a man in my house who is always at mischief. I cannot turn him out, but if I lock him up, he can do no harm; he is not changed, but I am free in the house. If I leave the door open, he is at mischief again: but we are to keep him locked up, this is what we are called to do—what God calls us to do. The world will not have this; it will mend and improve man, cultivate the old man, as if it could produce good fruit, because it does not see how bad it is. The world would dig about it and dung it. That has been tried. God cuts it down and grafts us with Christ. This condemning and cutting down was in the cross of Christ; not, of course, that He had any sin, but as made sin for us; and I know, not only my sins cleared away, but myself crucified with Christ, and my life hid with Him in God.

And this is available for power, if I carry it about in my heart. Supposing we honestly held ourselves dead; can Satan tempt a dead man? But in order for this, it must not be putting one's armour on when the danger is there; but, living with Christ, my heart is full of Him.

Would a woman who had heard that her child was killed or hurt at the other end of the town be thinking of what she saw in the shop-windows as she ran toward him? No; she would have just enough sense to find her way. If your hearts were fixed like that on Christ, nine-tenths of the temptations that come upon you would be gone: you would be thinking of something else, and outward things would only bring out sweetness, as they did with Christ; for we are never tempted above that which we are able.

Saints, if in earnest, have got to realise not only the putting away of their sins, but also the having died with Christ; and this delivers from the power of sin.

We see in chapter 3 a Christian with one object: knowing Christ has laid hold of him for glory, and his heart is running after Christ. I am to have no other object, though I may have many things to do. He is "in all" as the power of life, and He is "all" as the object of that life. He is all and in all. (See Col. 3: 12.) This is again summed up in the latter part of Galatians 2: "Not I, but Christ liveth in me"; and then the object: "I live by the faith of the Son of God." Then there is the sense of His perfect love: "Who loved me and gave himself for me." The heart is fixed on Him, and follows hard after Him.

There is another thing—the spirit and character in which we walk down here; and this we see in Christ coming down. When I have got this blessed place, Christ my life, holy boldness, yea, to know we are sitting in Him in heavenly places, the place a Christian is called to (a wonderful thing, I grant) is to go out from God and be an epistle of Christ. I joy in God, have got the blessedness of what He is, and go on in communion with Him to shew out His character in the world. This is in chapter 2.

Ought I to walk as Christ walked? Every Christian will own that: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." Suppose my soul has tasted this perfect love, and it is well we should recollect it, God's love shed abroad in our hearts, and know, be conscious down here, that we are loved as Jesus was loved; for if I really know God as thus revealed in Christ, what do I believe about Him? What put it into God's heart to send Christ down here? He knew how He would be treated. Did the world? It would not have Him when He came. It was all in His own heart! Perfect love in His heart; the unsuggested origin of every blessing. What character did it take in Christ? Was it staying up in heaven and saying, "You behave well and come up here?" No! we all know that. But He who, in the form of God, in the very same glory, thought it no robbery to be equal with God (mark the contrast with the first Adam), made Himself of no

reputation; and what brought this about? Purest love, love coming to serve.

For Christ took the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man. He emptied Himself of all the glory—the very opposite of the first Adam. Divine love came to serve; a new thing for God—the only new thing. And this is what I learn. I know this love, I know that I am made the righteousness of God in Him; so that I stand before Him, and then I come out from Him towards the world to bring out this blessed character. I have learned the love, and now I must come out and shew it. “Be ye followers of God as dear children.” You are children: that is all settled. Now you go and give yourself as Christ did, in whom this love is known—a sacrifice to God, and for us. The spirit of love is always lowliness, because it makes itself a servant. I get the grace that brought Christ down. It is very difficult for us to bow: I know that, beloved friends. He “went to another village.” There was perfect meekness; but it tries men—some more than others; but the moment perfect love is seen, it comes and takes the lowest place to serve others. Paul endured all things for the elect’s sake, that they might obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

And here I find what is entirely beyond law. Law tells me to love others as myself; grace tells me to give myself up entirely for my neighbour or for anybody. Did not God forgive you? You go and forgive your enemies. Is He kind to the unthankful and the evil? You go and be the same. It tests all the fibres of our hearts, all the pride and vanity and selfishness that are in us. You like doing your own will.

“He humbled himself and became obedient to death”; He goes so low down that He could go no lower; “even to the death of the cross.” But, then, “God hath highly exalted him.” He was the first grand example of “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Blessed be His name! He will never give up His service; it is the very thing He shews us, and in which He would that our hearts should see the perfection of His grace. It is what He is doing in John 13. He had been their servant

down here, but now they might think that there was an end of His service. No. He says, I cannot stop with you, but I must have you with Me: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." He does a slave's work; and this is what He does now. We pick up dirt as we go—there is no excuse for it, but then Christ is up there, the Advocate with the Father. And even in the time of glory, "He will gird himself and come forth and serve them"; He will be there to minister the blessing Himself. Our hearts want to learn the perfections of that love in which He came always down, down, till He could come no lower.

Are we willing to walk in that path? No one would deny we ought; but are we disposed to do it? Would our hearts be glad of the power of that grace which, holding the flesh as dead, can say, Here I am in the power of that love to walk as everybody's servant? We are to esteem others better than ourselves. If my heart is full of Christ, I judge myself for everything not like Christ, I judge the evil in myself because I see the blessedness in Christ. But what do I see in my brother? I see Christ in him. The effect of being full of Christ is to make me think little of self and much of my brother: there is no real difficulty about it if one is.

"Do all things without murmuring," etc. If you take every single part of this passage, you will find it a statement of what Christ was here. He was blameless and harmless, the Son of God, without rebuke in the midst of this evil world; He was the light of the world, and He was the word of life.

If I reckon the flesh dead, only the life of Christ comes out; if only this came out, we should be a very wonderfully blessed kind of people! To him that hath shall more be given. If I yield myself to God as one alive from the dead, I have got fruit here unto holiness, as well as fulness of blessing hereafter.

I would ask you, beloved friends, do you purpose to be Christians? Are you willing to yield yourselves to God as not having one bit of will of your own? There is power in Christ, not to say "I am pure," but, always having my eye on Him, to purify myself.

Philippians 2—The Lord Jesus in Humiliation and Service¹⁴

Words in Season, vol.7 p.211 [1892]

Collected Writings, vol.34, p.441

It is ever happy to have the Lord Himself before our minds as the object of our thoughts. The Christian is so completely brought to God, that He goes out from God to shew the character of God to the world. **The subject of this epistle is Christian Experience.** And you get this experience in the power of the Spirit of God so completely, that you **never get sin mentioned** in the epistle from beginning to end, nor the flesh, looked at as bad flesh, save to say he did not trust in it. Paul here does not know which to do—die or live. If I die, I am with the Lord; that is better; but I cannot work for His saints. If I live, there is the activity of love for them: and so he does not know which to choose. There is utter **absence of self** in that, and power. Then, he says, it is more needful for the church that I stay, and so I know that I shall be acquitted; deciding his own case. **It is all power**, the power of the Spirit of God leading a person out of the reach of sin. If you look at **the detail in verses 15-16**, you will find **his exhortation to others is an exact picture of what the life of Christ really was**: “blameless and harmless”; that is what Christ was— “the sons of God”; that is exactly what He was, Son of God— “without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation”; such was Jesus— “among whom ye shine as lights in the world”; when He was in the world He was the light of the world— “holding forth the word of life”; He was that word of life. The detail is precisely the same power of the Spirit of God, and the exhortation is just the detail of Christ’s life in the world.

In this epistle there are **two great principles of Christian life** (the last chapter is, he is superior to all cares and all circumstances). In chapter 3, it is the energy that carries a man on, so that everything else is dross and dung—that is **Christ in glory**. He has seen Him up there, and he says, I must get that. There are hindrances in the way. I will

throw them aside, he says. You will lose everything. I cannot help it; I must get Him. Oh, but you will die. No matter; that will be all the more like Him; I must get on to Him, the One up there in the glory, whom I have seen. "If by any means"; that is, whatever it may cost me, even life itself. "Resurrection *from among* the dead," that is the character of Christ's resurrection. **The resurrection of the saints has nothing in common with the resurrection of sinners.** Christ is the firstfruits, then those that are Christ's at His coming: He is not the firstfruits of sinners to be judged. Not a hint in Scripture of saints and sinners being raised together. "That I may attain unto the resurrection from among the dead" (the apostle uses a rare and emphatic word to explain his meaning)—what is there to attain to, if the wickedest man in the world goes up at the same time and in the same way? "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." What is the good of that, if all rise together? The character of Christ's resurrection was the positive seal of God's approval on Him and His work, and so is ours. As regards justification His resurrection is of all importance, for it is the seal of God on the excellency and perfectness of the work of Christ. He was taken out from among the dead as a perfect seal upon His work and Person, and everything else; and so is our resurrection the seal of our acceptance. Because God delights in us, we are taken out from among the dead, as Christ was. So he continues his running till he gets that. You have Christ in glory, and all is dross and dung except that. He wants Christ instead of Paul, and all he gets by the way is nothing—if he gets even death, it is all the more like Him.

In **chapter 2** you do not get Christ in glory as the one he is running after; not Christ gone up, but **Christ coming down.** One whom I am to be like in this, the graciousness of the walk that He displayed; and that is always going—down—going from the form of Godhead down to death. Where do I find what God is fully displayed—righteousness and love perfectly displayed? In death. It is a wonderful riddle that has come out, the Holy One going down—the Prince of Life going into death. We never completely learn, till we see it there—the things that the

angels desire to look into. No one knows the Son but the Father. We know the Father, but no one knows the Son; the divinity of Christ is maintained by the inscrutability of the incarnation: God becoming a man—that is unfathomable—and the meekest, lowliest man that ever walked this earth. Paul is taking up the truth of lowliness, etc., but the moment he begins he must bring out Christ. The motive of all exhortations is nothing less than the whole scope of Christianity. God come down and bringing salvation, and gone back again as man. Take the commonest exhortations, the spring and motive is nothing short of obedience to the word of God Himself. Eating and drinking even is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. I am merely eating like a beast if it is not. He exhorts them to walk in lowliness and love (there had been some little squabbling, I suppose, among them). These Philippians had been sending help to the apostle from a long way off, and he will not reproach them, but says, Now I see how you love me; I see how you care for me and my being happy. Now, if you want to make me perfectly happy, walk in love among yourselves. It is a reproach so delicately brought in that their hearts could not resist it. "And let each esteem other better than themselves." It sounds unpractical and impossible; but if I think of myself with the mind of God, I see the evil, the sin in myself. If I think of another, and I am full of Christ, I shall see all the value of Christ upon him, I shall see with Christ's heart, and I can esteem him better than myself, for I see evil in myself, and I see Christ in him. "Let this mind be in you," etc., that is, the spirit in which Christ was, always going down; first, being in the form of Godhead, and in the glory, He takes the place of a man, and then He humbles Himself again to death. He is the first grand example of "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted," and that is what we have to do—go down.

Here we get the principle of Christ's whole personal course, and we get not only what He was, but the delight He took in us. He took us up. His interest is in us, and the expression of this delight was not simply He acts graciously towards men, but He Himself becomes one of them. He went down to death. We go down to death by

sin, He by grace; we by disobedience, He by obedience. So He gets by obedience and grace what we get by disobedience and sin. From the first step that we go He takes us up till He has us where He is. Speaking in a general way, I cannot look at Christ in His life and walk till my soul is at peace and settled. If a soul has not settled peace, you will find it wants the Epistles first, not the Gospels; because the Epistles are the reasonings of the Holy Ghost on the value of Christ's work. John's writings bring God down here in grace to sinners. Paul takes man up there in righteousness to God. Paul takes man up to God in the light; John brings God down to man. You get in the Gospel of John, God brought down to us in our need, get Him talking to the woman at the well, and His disciples wondering, and she finds that in this tired man at the well, she has been speaking to the Lord of glory. I thought, she said, He was a poor tired Jew, who wanted a drink of water. Oh, He says, if you knew how that God had come so low as to be dependent on you for a drink of water, you would have confidence in Him at once.

This poor, tired man was the Lord of life and glory, who not only could lay all her life bare before her in its sin and shame, but could fully meet her heart, meet her need, and attract her to Himself, so that she loses all her sense of fear and shame in her anxiety to bring others to Him too. When our consciences are awakened, we want then to know how a sinner can be just with God, and so we turn to Romans and the reasonings of thy Epistles; but when the heart knows I am a child, and that the same favour rests on me as on Jesus, I turn back to the Gospels and say, I must look at Jesus—what a Saviour He is! I want Him *close, close* to me then! brought close to my eye. Then I look back to the Gospel of John and see God come down in Him. I get in Him one who, instead of driving the one who had the defilement away, drives away the defilement, and leaves the poor leper *clean* and *near Him*. Where do we find the blessed Lord going as soon as He is called out to His public ministry? To the baptism of repentance. Why does He go there? Oh, He says, these poor people going there are those in whom God is working. They are taking the first step in the right direction, and I must go with

them. I find this perfectness and love in Him. I cannot leave them to go alone, He says, I must go with them. I need not say He needed no repentance, but it was the first right step of that poor remnant, and He will be associated with them. This is not your place, says John. Yes, He says, but “suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.” He does not haughtily say “becometh me,” but “becometh us.” He takes His place in grace along with us (here it was with the Jew), and the heaven is opened for Him, and the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, and the Father’s voice proclaims Him Son; the model of our place in grace through redemption.

I get heaven opened four times. At His baptism, when the Holy Ghost comes down on Him. Then heaven is opened, and the angels of God ascend and descend on the Son of man, that is, the highest angels become His servants. Heaven is opened, and He comes out on the white horse to judge. And between these two I get heaven opened for Stephen to see Him. The heaven was opened to Stephen as to Christ. But mark how the glory of His Person is always maintained. When heaven is opened to Stephen, it is that he may look in and see Jesus; but when at His baptism heaven was opened, it is for heaven to look at Him. He was not looking at an object in heaven. Heaven was looking at Him. Heaven was never opened for heaven to look down on anything in this earth till that divine blessed One is there. The fulness of the Godhead is in Him, but He is sealed as a man. The Father says, All My delight is there. What is most despised on earth is the One heaven cannot but be opened to, and the Father cannot keep silence about Him. A man is the delight of God. Heaven is opened to Him, the Holy Ghost comes down upon Him, and the Father’s voice proclaims Him His Son. And it is of profound interest to see that here first the whole Trinity is fully revealed, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

First, then, His place as the manifestation of accepted man is settled. As soon as that is settled, Yes, He says, but these people are in conflict and difficulty, and have got this tyrant over them, I must go and meet him for them. He meets the devil—overcomes him, of course. The devil wants Him to go out of His course, to keep not His first

estate; he would have Him leave the place of obedience and a servant on the plea of His being a Son. The written word was sufficient to conquer the devil, and enough for the Son of God to use. All possible salvation depended on His victory; all that victory depended on the written word of God. Never, save at His death, was there such a solemn moment. What He held for enough, and what Satan held for enough, was the written word of God. **He bound the strong man by that means**, and set about spoiling his goods. There is one man who knows the truth because He is the truth, who is satisfied with the written word, and that is the Lord. There is no craft of Satan that the word of God is not sufficient to meet. There was One as a man wielding a power that was sufficient to deliver man from all the effects of sin. If sick, they were healed—healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him—power working in goodness. And what is the effect? They would not have Him. The Lord on earth had power to remove the effects of Satan's power, but behind those was man's heart, which could ask Him to depart. Where there is a legion of devils, and He sends them off into the herd of swine, the men prayed Him to depart out of their coasts—did not want Him. The quiet devil that influenced their hearts was worse than all the legion of devils that ran noisily down the steep place into the sea.

Satan says, If you take this people up, you take them up at your cost. I have got the power of death over them. But He goes on. Presently Satan, prince of this world, raises all the world against Him. The disciples are afraid, and leave Him; one betrays Him, one denies Him, and the rest run away. Well, then, He says, since this hatred is so great, I must give up My life to redeem them out of it—"Through death, destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

They ask Peter, "Does not your master pay tribute?" Peter comes to Jesus, and He shews He is God by shewing that He knows what is in Peter's heart, and says, "Of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute; of their own children or of strangers?" "Of strangers," Peter says. "Then are the children free." He was the Son of the Great King of the

temple, and free; and so was Peter. He puts Himself with Peter. "Notwithstanding, lest *we* offend" (puts Himself with Peter again), then shews He is God over all, and Lord of creation, by disposing of creation, commanding the fish of the sea to yield up the tribute money, "that give for *thee* and *me*"—puts Peter and Himself both together again. It is lovely!

While He was God in everything, He was the humblest, most affable man that ever walked this earth. In death only is He **alone**. He looked for compassion and found none. "Tarry ye here, and watch with me." In His sore trial He looked in Gethsemane for them to watch with Him; they could not, and an angel from heaven comes to strengthen Him. **Will He ever give up being a servant? Never? That form of servant He will never give up.** Selfishness likes to be served. Love likes to serve. That is just what I find in Christ.

No intellect knows God. **We only know God by our wants.** Infidels say you cannot have more than the power of man's mind. If I see a decrepit old woman leaning on the arm of a strong man, and supported by his strength, it is not in herself that she knows what strength is: and that is how we know God. **No man can know God by knowing;** he would not be man if he did, and God would not be God at all. It is **conscience** that knows the way God meets us. It is **a want in me.** Look at Simon the Pharisee and the woman. What did he know of Christ? He felt no need of Him; thought he was putting honour upon Him in asking Him, though in curiosity, to his house, and does not shew Him courtesy even as to a guest. And Christ is not inattentive to neglect. He knows and feels it. If I am cold and indifferent to Him, He knows and feels it all; it touches His heart. **God's essential names are Light and Love. Look at the woman: the light made her know herself, and the love made her know Christ and trust Him.** Christ thoroughly knew her heart, and she thoroughly knew Christ's heart. While Simon had thought Him unworthy of the common courtesies of life, she found a fulness of grace, and of light, and love that could meet all her need. Her sins, which are many (He knew them all), are all forgiven, for she loved much. God's heart and

man's heart, through grace, met in blessedness where the Pharisee was an utter stranger.

I learn this lesson here, that the Person of the Lord Jesus may have full power in my heart before I know the fact of forgiveness. The essential names of God, Light and Love, I find both brought out in Christ 5 **the light that reveals everything in me, and the love that puts it all away.** When the light comes and manifests me before God, I find myself in the presence of love, that has done everything for me. If I had the light without the love, I must run away and hide myself. If I had the love without the light, it would not do at all. It could not be. I get both in Christ—the divine Light that discovers all, and the divine Love that makes me know that all is put away. When light comes in, the conscience is honest. Take the thief, and hear him—“We indeed justly”—light had discovered that to him—“but this man has done nothing amiss.” How did he know? By divine teaching. Would not our hearts all say, He has done nothing amiss? Then again, “*Lord,*” he says—that is divine teaching as to His Person. All His disciples had run away; he alone owns His Lordship there on the cross—comforts His heart in that hour. And what does he ask? Is it relief from his pain? No. Suffering all that terrible agony on the cross, does he ask the One hanging by his side, whose power he owned, to lessen the suffering? No; but to be remembered by Him in His kingdom; and the effect of this is, “To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Oh, here was a heart that had found out what He was. A Pharisee is a Pharisee, and a whited sepulchre, but a *broken heart is suited to a heart-healing God.*

Is He a Servant in the glory? Oh, yes, He says, indeed I am. He says to His disciples, I am going to the Father; I cannot be your companion any more on earth; but I am not going to give you up. What is to be done? I must fit you to be with Me; give you “a part with me.” You are clean, but you will be picking up dirt in your walk in this world, and this will not do to be associated with Me in glory; I must wash your feet. And that is what He is doing now. **He is a**

Servant to wash our feet now.¹⁵ He sets Himself to that service. We do not cease to be clean, looked at as to our standing before God, but we walk through the world and pick up dirt, and Christ is our servant to wash it away. **In Luke 12 we find He will be our Servant in the glory.** “He will gird himself, and come forth and serve them.” It is divine love unspeakably blessed. He will never give up being a Man. “Let your loins be girded, and your lights burning.” I must have a full profession of Christ, that is, lights burning. Have your loins well tucked up for service, while I am away; when I come again I shall have My own way, and you shall sit down, and I will serve you. Shall I ever forget the humiliation of Christ? Shall I ever forget His manhood in that way, giving Himself for me, and then taking me up there to be with Himself, where He is remaining a Man for me through all eternity; shall I forget? Never! never! through all eternity. I shall never forget His humiliation on earth. While seeing Him in glory animates the soul to run after Him, what feeds the soul is the Bread that came down. That produces a spirit that thinks of everything but itself.

I need not go into detail, but **you get in the rest of Philippians 2 all the delicacy of feeling brought out which flows from absence of self, and love to others, because the soul has got imbued with Christ, and is feeding upon Him, till unconsciously it grows to be like Him.** I must have the second as well as the third of Philippians: all the energy you like, but then go and study Him, and live by Him, and you will come out in His likeness, in all His grace, and gentleness, and loveliness. Oh, what a place—redeemed by Him, going to be with Him in glory, and set meanwhile to manifest Him on earth!

The Lord give us to be so occupied with Him who was so full of love, so full of gentleness, so full of lowliness, that we shall manifest the same! The first sin of the world was losing confidence in God. He comes back to us in all these sins of ours and says, Now you may trust me. It is God

¹⁵ “Washed,” in John 13:10, refers to the whole body; “wash,” to feet or hands. The words are different in Greek.

winning back the confidence of your heart, unbounded confidence in unbounded love—and that not by exhortations from heaven, but by His presence on earth. If you are a poor woman, not fit to face any of your fellow creatures, come to Me; I will have you, trust Me: if you are hanging on a cross for your crimes, you shall go up to-day with Me to paradise. My blood is enough to put your crimes away; my heart is open to receive you.”

The Lord give us to know more of that One, who, when He put forth His own sheep went before them—met the lion for them, and delivered them! The Lord give us to realise what He was!

Philippians 2:1-18

Le Messager Evangelique¹⁶: Meditation #81 (1895)

As long as your heart lets himself be dominated by greed, his own will is manifested and is the source of our sins. That's why it's called “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling” about ourselves, because it is quite different when it comes to trust in God. Paul was in prison and could not personally give his attention to the Church, but, though absent, he was present in spirit with her; he urged, so that its absence does not should rise up. Already some proclaimed Christ in a spirit of contention, and there was disagreement between Euodia and Syntyche. It exercised the heart of Paul in prison.

It's pretty rare to see in the Old Testament, within the human heart. The Psalms, the story of Moses, we provide some examples; but the New Testament presents us with much more frequent. It is that God is more akin to us. The Holy Spirit there is more familiarly; He is the Comforter who came to stay here and that takes care of all the details and all the circumstances of those among whom he remains. He takes interest; he brings God's love. What he was more worthy of God?

¹⁶ Translated using Google

Nothing prevents us to understand the Word more than to separate subjects from their background. This is what often happened to pass the v.12, we are talking about. Paul deals with the difficulties of the Church. He wants to see his beloved Philippians walk humbly as Christ himself (v.5-11). In verse. 12, it does not address any power that is in man. The phrase “your own salvation,” is contrasted with the work of Paul who, until his imprisonment, had worked himself to their salvation. By the absence of the apostle, had experienced things change. Satan was trying to raise the disciples in the absence of the man who had taught. When Paul was there for them off the fiery darts of the evil one, the Church stood behind him in peace. “Death,” he said, “operates in us, but life in you” (2 Cor. 4:12). The Philippians had in the Lord, gained confidence in the bonds of the apostle in his absence. But the enemy could use that trust. They may have lost in some measure distrust of themselves and of the flesh. Paul wants to warn against this trap; that is why it speaks to them with fear and trembling. It’s not Paul, he said, who works in you to will and to do is God. Paul is in prison, but God is all-powerful. The more we are deprived of outside help, we need more vigilance and humility, but we can rely on God who works in us to will and to do.

Between hello and he gives us the enjoyment of the results of salvation, God leads us on a path where it tests our hearts by the fight with Satan. We have salvation, but by the fight, we work out our salvation—because it means here in front of us at the end of our Christian career—with fear and trembling. It’s a long, slow work that God operates in the saved, to be known to them and teach them what is in their hearts. Satan tempts, is transformed into an angel of light, trying to terrify: these battles are needed and we are good. We need it for alertness, spiritual activity. If we are not careful, Satan has the upper hand. The test makes us feel that we are small and poor in our hearts, but the ground being worked best, we produce more fruit. The two reasons for vigilance are that we are still in the presence of Satan, and we do not know when the Lord will come. This is when we have the grace of God that we really fear the enemy of our souls. Worldly

fears God, in the sense of being afraid of him, but he does not fear Satan; he will flee the man who speaks of God, and not fear him who causes evil. The Christian, however, does not fear God, in the sense that we have just described, and he fears Satan. Sensing his weakness and of dealing with an ever watchful enemy, he knows that if he gets trapped, it contristera the Holy Spirit that never lend what God condemns. The child of God, possessing such a treasure, fear the abductor.

It is always important to oppose the beginnings of evil. Satan tempts us by presenting objects in our lusts, pleasures, vanities in our hearts and in our eyes. Hence, the need to be vigilant, to remain in communion with God followed, so that we enjoyed enough of the things of Christ to those who are foreign to it have no power over us.

If we did not have enough confidence in ourselves, Satan also seeks to throw us in defiance of God. It also presents challenges to our faith. That's what he did to Jesus in the temptation in the beginning of his ministry. In the end, he came back, presenting the cross, contempt, contradiction of sinners, anger, judgment, abandoning God to crush, if possible, destroy his faith and his work.

Such are the temptations of Satan. If we love holiness, we therefore oppose the beginnings of evil, and to do it, enjoy the fellowship of God; let us good things. If the cup is full of our hearts, Satan can not put anything there. And when we fell, our only recourse is to confess our sin and look to Jesus, our advocate with the Father. As for doing the will of God, fear nothing. We must never shrink from the consequences of that will. We will lose our friends in this world, but we already have in this world a hundred times as much, and in the age to come eternal life.

The Christian must watch, because it waits for the Lord, and he has to be as it should be when the Lord comes. If delayed, the effect of waiting my whole life will be exactly what I want it to be when I grow up before him.

Satan is always there, and the Lord will soon be here: these are the two main reasons for vigilance. If I have such motives to watch and pray, is that I am a child of

God in the ranks of the army of God. I have not for about fear and trembling that God does not love me, but I lost what I have. If I believe that the whole inheritance of Christ is mine, I will show what joy, but also how vigilant not to let me steal these things.

We belong to Jesus, and Jesus is ours. If we do not feel it, we know neither the strength nor the power of our Christian life.

Philippians 2:1-18

Le Messager Evangelique¹⁷: Meditation #122 (1900)

The desire of the apostle was that his beloved Philippians were blameless (v.15-16). Salvation is always presented in this epistle as taking place in the desert and as something that is fully realized at the end of the Christian career. It is simple, because our salvation is, in fact, be at the end in the glory of Christ, which we acquired itself, but we do not yet enjoy. Having received the Holy Spirit as a deposit, we know very well that this glory is ours. Paul wants in the way of the desert, we glorify God perfectly, and, to this end, the Holy Spirit moves upon our affections for Christ make us more valuable. The life of Jesus always glorified the Father; If the Spirit of Christ is in us, our desire will also glorify him. Do not confuse the desire to glorify the Lord with the completion of salvation. When Jesus glorified the Father, it was obviously not the work of his salvation. Unable to find peace, if our salvation depends anything of how we glorify God. The soul is unhappy not to boast, it's a good thing, but if we us relate the certainty of salvation, we will be confused and even our service will be, because it gives us the spirit of bondage instead a spirit of freedom.

It is the atmosphere of grace, that we can serve God. Under grace, I can serve God as the angels are, without concern or question of salvation, but because it belongs to my new nature.

¹⁷ Translated using Google

We have to desire to always be lighted torches by the Lord to be lights in the world, and if we do not have this desire, this is proof that we are in a state of sleep. We have no other relationship with God than saved her children by grace and God knows us not otherwise.

One can find two subjects to glorify the Lord Jesus. Often a soul sees her poor provision which prevents glorify the Lord as it should; there is in this case the danger of falling under the spirit of the law and the duty to look to glorify God, instead of looking to the Lord himself. The sight of evil veil God; it is a means of weakening and discouragement. There is only one remedy for this: look to Christ. Nothing is more humiliating than to look to Christ. Often the desire to glorify God, joins the desire to be happy with yourself. It's just pride. Looking to Christ, I find the perfection that humbles me and grace that lifts me. I see Him in all humility, all patience, and I am ashamed of myself, while looking to the grace notes and encourages me. Looking at myself, nothing can out of my heart that troubles me; I live in the atmosphere of evil, and I find no force. In Jesus, the view rises above evil; we feel that we love, that we are united to Him. If the truth came through Jesus, He also came by grace. The truth condemns us and humbles us, pardon us and encourages us over.

What's higher, more blessed to the soul, than to have the same feeling that the Lord Jesus! The heart responds to the thought of the apostle. Quickened and animated by the Holy Spirit, his desire is to have the same feeling that was in Jesus. The Holy Spirit, asking that, unfolds before our eyes the grace that is in him, "Who, being in very nature God, etc". But soon the heart says, "Ah! if I was like that, "or:" This is what God requires. "This is not the work of the Spirit, desiring to have in us the thought that was in Christ Jesus and showing us what it is immediately. When the Holy Spirit works in the heart, it produces a desire by revealing Jesus, and the effect of desire, making us contemplate.

If I am willing to be something and I see the evil in me, it discourages me and does not cure the disease. But if I see that I want to be something when Jesus emptied himself, I am ashamed of this desire and I prefer to be annihilated

with Jesus. Evil is thus destroyed and fellowship with the Lord is renewed. My soul is reflected in the current well. It is impossible to want to be something when we see that Jesus emptied.

Let's see how Jesus showed this spirit that led him to destroy. He comes to make a will other than his own: "I come, O God, to do your will." He takes the place which He was prescribed in the counsels of God. Have no will is annihilated. Jesus emptied himself to be made a curse by the One he came to do the will.

When Jacques and John ask to be seated on his right and to his left, he said: I have nothing to give you; I have no desire for that. He is the Father's will. He gives his disciples, to whom God wishes, the rewards that his father wants.

The result of this frustration is the contempt of the world. He was still subjected to scorn. Man can, for heroism, submit to whatever his will dictates; Jesus, in all things, give up his. He submitted in advance to be abandoned, even his disciples.

His father was there; it was for the glory he had submitted to this annihilation. God made sin for us; Jesus was the most horrible thing. He submits, "It is what is pleasing to your eyes." But even then, God had to give it up too. It was the destruction helplessly. God had forsaken him. It has nothing as a reward, such as support, as relief. There was one thing, the power of love. This is the principle of the Christian life. We have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus, and we will have the same incentive Him; but we can never say with him: "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Enough for you to have the same share as Jesus in his destruction? It is the renunciation of self. That is why God tests us because there is a thick layer of clean that has not been reached will. As long as this evil has not been fully explored we can enjoy God. Blessed are we when God searches our hearts and we reduced to forget us, to think only of God and do not want to find ourselves in something that satisfies us. For this, we must look to Jesus, have the same thought as him: then, with unveiled

face beholding we are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

Philippians 2—3

Girdle of Truth, vol.6 p.300 [1862]

Collected Writings, vol.17, p.361

If it suits your little publication,¹⁸ I send you some brief thoughts on Philippians 2 and 3. The whole epistle is a very remarkable one, and raises the Christian to his highest condition of matured **experience**; but on this I will say a few words before I close.

I turn now to the above chapters. The former gives us **Christian character**, as men speak—Christian grace; the latter, **the energy** which carries the Christian above present things. The former speaks of **Christ coming down** and humbling Himself; the latter, of **His being on high**, and of the prize of our calling above.

A little careful attention will shew that **chapter 2** throughout presents the gracious **fruits connected with the heart's study of the blessed Lord's humiliation**, and of its **imbibing the spirit of it**; and that **chapter 3** gives the picture of that blessed energy which **counts the world as dross, overcomes on the way, and looks forward to the time when the Lord's power shall have subdued even the power of death** in us and all its effects, and change us into glory. **We need both** these principles and the motives connected with them. We may see much of the energy of Christianity in a believer, and rejoice in it; while another displays much graciousness of character but no energy that overcomes the world. Where the flesh, or mere natural energy, mixes itself in our path with the divine energy, the way of the sincere and devoted Christian requires to be corrected by the former; more inward communion and gracious likeness to Christ, more feeding on the bread which came down from heaven. Besides

¹⁸ This paper, like some others, was sent to the Editor of "The Girdle of Truth."—Ed.

displaying Christ, it would give weight and seriousness to his activity—make it more real and divine. On the other hand, one who maintains a gracious deportment and judges, perhaps, what he sees to be fleshly in the energy of another fails himself in that energy, and casts a slur on that which is really of God in his brother.

Oh that we knew how to be a little self-judging and complete in our Christian path; that we had nearness enough to Christ to draw from Him all grace and all devotedness, and correct in ourselves whatever tends to mar the one or the other! Not that I expect that all Christians will ever have alike all qualities. I do not think it is the mind of God they should have. They have to keep humbly in their place. The eye cannot—it is not meant it should—say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor the hand to the feet. Completeness is in Christ alone. Mutual dependence and completing one another under His grace is the order of His body. It is hard for some active minds to think so; but it is true humility and contentedness to be nothing and to serve, and to esteem others more excellent than ourselves—an easy practical way to arrive at it. They have the thing in which we are deficient. Our part is to do what the Lord has set us to do, to serve and count Him all, for in truth He does it; and to be glad to be nothing when we have quietly done His will, that He may be all.

But to return to my chapters: that chapter 2 gives us the humiliation of Christ is evident. We are to pursue its application. But the way it is introduced is very beautiful. The Philippians, who had already early in the gospel history shewn grace in this respect, had thought of Paul in his distant prison; and Epaphroditus, giving effect to their love, and full of gracious zeal, had not regarded his life to accomplish this service, and minister to the apostle's wants. The apostle makes a touching use of this love of the Philippians, while owning it as the refreshings of Christ. He had found "consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, bowels and mercies," in the renewed testimony of the affection of the Philippians. His heart was drawn out also toward them. If they would make him perfectly happy, they must be thoroughly united and happy amongst themselves. How graciously, with what

delicate feeling, he turns to note their faults and dangers here in association with their expressions of love to him! How calculated to win and to make any Euodias and Syntyches ashamed of disputes where grace is thus at work! Then he speaks of the means of walking in this spirit. Every one should think of the spiritual gifts and advantages of His brother as well as of his own. To do this he must have the mind that was in Christ. This leads us to the great principle of the chapter.

Christ is set forth in full contrast with the first Adam. The first when in the form of man set up by robbery to be equal with God: "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And he became disobedient unto death. But the blessed One, being in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation, and in the form of a servant was obedient unto death. He was really God, as Adam was really man; but the point here is to note the condition and status each was in respectively, and out of which, in ambition or grace, he came. For Christ was truly God still, when He had taken the form of a man; but He had taken the form of a servant, and was too really a man and a servant in grace. Christ in love humbled Himself; Adam in selfishness sought to be exalted and was abased. Christ humbled Himself, and as man exalted. It was not merely that He bore patiently the insults of men, but He humbled Himself. This was love. There were two great steps in it. Being in the form of God, He took the form of man; and as man He humbled Himself, and was obedient unto death, and that, the death of the cross. This is the mind which is to be in us—love making itself nothing to serve others. Love delights to serve; self likes to be served. Thus the true glory of a divine character is in lowliness, human pride in selfishness. In the former, in us, both gracious affections and devotedness and counting on gracious affections in others are developed, a source of genuine joy and blessing to the church.

In following the chapter, we shall see this taught in general, and produced unconsciously, as it were, in details. First, after stating the exaltation and glory of Christ as Lord, he presses obedience (perfectly shewn in Christ), than which nothing is more lowly, for we have no

will in it; and having directly to do with the power of the enemy, without the shelter of the apostle's energy, they were to **work out their own salvation** with fear and trembling. For, if Paul, who had so laboured for them, was now in prison, and could not, it was, after all "God (not Paul) who worked in them, to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

Salvation is always in the Philippians the great result of final deliverance from evil and entrance into glory. Everything is looked at the end, though the blessing shines down on the way. See then the result: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Is there a word in this that could not be said of Christ? Only He was the Model, and we are to follow His steps as partakers of life in Him. It is just what Christ was, and so it is Christian character. We study it with delight and adoration in Him. It is formed in us.

Now see the gracious affections which flow out from this lowliness, in which self disappears by love. "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." He makes the faith of the Philippians the principal thing. It was the offering to God. His part was only supplementary towards it, though it went to death. For the Philippians were Christ's, the fruit of the travail of Christ's soul, Christ's crown and joy as Redeemer. So the apostle saw them and rejoiced in them. His service had ministered to this. If it went on to give up his life for it, he rejoiced in the service, so much the more evidently self-sacrificing love, for love delights in this. And they, for this reason, were to rejoice with him, for it was really his glory thus to give himself up for Christ.

But more. He was thinking of their happiness, and would send Timotheus and learn how they were getting on. But he counted on their love, and he would not send him till he would be able to say to them how his affairs were going on at Rome, where he had to appear before the emperor, perhaps so to close his life. All this is very sweet. There is the confidence of love, the reckoning on it in others, which produces its free flow, mutually felt and known to

be so. Nor was it in the apostle alone, as we shall see. Moreover, it was in the midst of the coldness of the saints, which trial (and for the flesh the discrediting opposition of the world) had produced, to which the apostle alludes in this epistle. But the apostle's love did not grow cold nor distrustful by it, and God had given him the comforting testimony of love in the distant Philippians, as he notices in the beginning of the chapter; and love was springing up into courage in others too by a little patience, as we see in chapter 1:14.

But these same fruits of love are found in Epaphroditus and his relations with the Philippians. Paul sends him back with affectionate witness of what he was; for Epaphroditus was longing after them all. He had undertaken his commission heartily—came probably along the great Egnation high road nearly a thousand miles, and, in his refusal of relaxation, had been sick, nigh unto death. But it was the work of Christ. Did Paul appreciate it the less as to himself because it was for Christ? In no way. Had Epaphroditus fallen a victim to his service for him, it would have been to the apostle a deep blow and sorrow, and that he had his cup full of, though sustained of God. God had mercy on Epaphroditus, and on Paul in him. See here how the heart, free in grace, can estimate present mercies! It was not natural affection in relationship, just and fitting as that may be in its place, but divine affections. Epaphroditus would have gone to heaven surely. But the spirit of the apostle would taste present goodness—God's goodness in circumstances; it would know a "God who comforts those that are cast down." And he blesses God that the beloved Epaphroditus did not fall a sacrifice to his zeal in accomplishing his mission.

Nor was this all. What made Epaphroditus anxious was, that the Philippians had heard he had been sick, and he knew this. **He reckoned on their love.** They will be anxious, he thought, and will not be at rest until they know how I am; I must set off to them. How a son, who knew a mother's love, who had heard he was ill, would reckon on her uneasiness and her desire for news, and would be anxious she should know he was well. Such was the

affection among Christians, and among Christians where devotedness and love had alas! already sadly waned—where all sought their own, as a general state, such were “the consolations in Christ, the comfort of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, the bowels and mercies.” How refreshing it is! Nor is the blessed source ever wanting in Christ, however low all may be; for faith knows no difficulties, nothing between us and Christ. There is no lack in Him to produce fruits of grace.

If we look at ourselves, we could never speak of humbling ourselves: for we are nothing. But practically in Christ, the mind which was in Him is to be in us, and in grace we have to humble ourselves, to have the mind that was in Him, to have done with ourselves and serve. Then these lovely fruits of grace will flow out unhindered, whatever be the state even of Christendom around us. Working out lowly our own salvation with fear and trembling in the midst of the spiritual dangers of the Christian life, and of pretensions to greatness and spiritual distinction, because true greatness has disappeared as it had when the apostle was put in prison; not with the fear of uncertainty, but because God works in us, and that gives the sense of the seriousness and reality of the conflict in which we are engaged; obedience, the humblest thing of all, for there is no will in it, characterising our path, we shall seek the mind of Christ, and be clothed with His character. Blessed privilege! Be more jealous to keep it than our human rights and importance, and the blessed graces of heavenly love will flow forth and bind together, in a love which has primarily Christ for its object, the hearts of the saints. In such a state it is easy to count others better than themselves; as Paul saw the value of the Philippians to Christ, he was but offered on their faith—easy, because when we are near Christ we see the value of others to and in Christ, and we see our own nothingness, perhaps our actual short-comings in love too.

I have lengthened out my communication on this chapter so much that I reserve what I have to say on the third chapter, and the character of the whole epistle for another opportunity. I think, on the whole, that this gives the higher, though not the most readily striking and energetic,

side of Christian life. But, as I said at the beginning, both have fully their place. If it suit your publication, I may afterwards, if the Lord will, take up some practical subjects which have connected themselves with these in my mind.

May the Lord bless your various communications to the edification of His saints, and make that blessing flow in those too who contribute them.

Philippians 3

12 November 1844 [JND in Geneva in Oct. LF1:87]

Le Messager Evangelique¹⁹: Meditation #216 (1916)

It is touching to see here the exercise of the heart, resulting in the Holy Spirit, and forcing us to find, in a real trust, while our God. We often have the Lord Jesus rather than next to you in front; then it is not in the full light; we do not judge and it does not feel right in his presence. Faith brings us face to face with Christ so that shine upon us; otherwise it remains in our hearts something fishy, and we lack complete confidence. The solid happiness for our souls is a trust based on the true light of Christ's presence. Such was the case here of the apostle. He was in jail, about to be sentenced, after a long Christian life. His heart is exercised, tried, and the result is complete confidence. It is a solemn thing, or rather very happy to be on his way to eternity. This joyful trust in the Lord broke out in the heart of Paul. All his epistle presents the Christian path. Hi the result of the manifestation of Jesus at his coming, lies on the other side of the desert which is crossed. Have we, by the way, the full confidence that characterized the apostle? Paul is not talking about Christ's love for him, but his affection for him, for the Lord. Before him, he sees everything as a loss; it is always the case when you have a fair idea of Christ. In addition, there is no hesitation on the goal. If there is hesitation, is that our hearts have carnal desires, and Jesus can not be

¹⁹ Translated using Google

the purpose of such desires. It is our strength that so that is the aim and object of our hearts. Anything else is a waste, harmful acquisition, compared with the excellence of his knowledge. Christ is our object, we see very quickly what is in his glory. God can not lead affections misused in any way, and when the heart is not stripped himself came either uncertainty or power for evil, and that's when the trouble which gives energy. The strong man is the one who has only one goal, and when the heart has Christ for one thing, he can speak of happiness and joy. This truth is a daily application: when our hearts are weak, uncertain, unhappy is that they do not have Christ sole purpose.

Paul believes all things like garbage; he does not say he has estimated and, once and for all, but it is currently and daily experience. He is the man of a single object. If you want to rejoice in the Lord, possess the wisdom that makes him happy is the secret. Jesus is light; when we put this light before us, we see if it is or not, our only object; and it is necessary for that, we would constantly to Him. It is the necessary object of the affections of the new man, and, hence, it becomes the strength to renounce everything. When I see Jesus, my heart is drawn to Him and away from everything else. Weakening of Christian life, is the lack of faith that has failed to take the path that leads straight to God. When you do not want to follow the path of God's promises, the least difficulties become insurmountable. The people of Israel did not come up to the mountain of the Amorites when Joshua committed there; things that would have been only "bread", if he had followed God's direction, become insurmountable obstacles. Wisdom is getting in the way of God *when* he shows us; it is too late to take next. After this failure, God becomes the guide of Israel for forty years in the wilderness, but how it was more sad and humiliating for the people! We are exposed to a lot of work and difficult things, because we have not had the courage to walk the path of faith, whereas if our goal was Christ, we would have forgotten anything else.

Paul had not reached the goal; he continued to pursue it, do not yet have the things he hoped; it was an exercise of faith. But he knew that Jesus had placed him in this way

and had seized him for that. We are in a way which is both the end and the beginning, because "He is the way." This gives a full humility, entire dependence on grace, full confidence in his love. Our heart is happy, happy relationship with him like that Enoch walked with God. Consciousness of not having achieved such a glorious goal, proves its excellence and supports hope. When a treasure to buy is large enough, it is not discouraged before possess. Christ sustains the inner energy and purpose is quite good for it worthwhile to pursue it with patience. "I'm doing *a* thing. " Can we tell? It does only one thing when you have a goal. Be certain that this effort will always be accompanied by a genuine humility.

"Our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour." We feel that as long as we are in this body, there will be affliction, with the inability to fully enjoy what we possess in the resurrection. But it is our part to be necessarily afflicted and tried to enjoy eternal blessing, and this prevents us from seeking relief in things of a world whose end is destruction. We expect redemption. It is blessed to have such a glorious end, only the power of God that Jesus will return, can we do achieve. This is Christian: he needs a Saviour for the fulfilment of his joy, as he needed to accomplish his justification. Seek some pleasure in the way, it's looking for something that distracts the heart of Christ, and, let me add, even brotherly love, for all our affections are influenced by the weakening of our first love. A heart that Jesus object is able to expand indefinitely to love him as he is loved. We are all well away from that because that goal is so perfect that we need to be reached, wait as Saviour one who will transform the body of our humiliation into conformity to the body of his glory. What joy to think that Christ, who is our strength in the way, was himself such a purpose and that it will take nothing less than His power that can subdue all things, for we place. Do not look elsewhere than Jesus consolation and encouragement when God sends us a test for us to look to Him. Look to Jesus. It is our goal, our strength, the beginning and the end of our journey. The Happy Christian who enters! There is

enough grace in Christ, to be realized these things in all of us!

Philippians 3—Notes

Words of Truth, vol.5 p. p.84 [1870]

As Christians we are called to walk through the world by faith, in the things unseen and outside of it. Walking by faith really tests the state of the heart; for “The things that are seen are temporal;” but “The things that are not seen are eternal.”

In Phil.2 we find Christ coming down here, and as Man His path is the opposite of Adam’s, who sought to exalt himself. Jesus humbled Himself, and became “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” He was made in the likeness of men—took upon Him the form of a servant—and, as Man, was the pattern of graciousness and obedience. The Son of God alone could do this. It is the business of the creature to keep his first estate. Though Son of God, His elevation never destroyed the sensibility of. His heart to all round; He felt everything a great deal the more; but He felt it for others.

You never find Christ governed by the circumstances through which He was obliged to pass, but always moved by them. At Nain He meets the widow who had lost her only son—He is touched with compassion—touched by the circumstances, and He acted divinely in them.

As we advance in the divine life we never find it is stoical insensibility—indifference to the sorrow and trial of circumstances through which we pass ourselves, or those through which, others are passing. There are links which bind the church of God together in divine communion. You see these features come out in Paul and Epaphroditus in ch.2. These bonds in the church of God will be the expression of divine grace in the midst of circumstances which affect other people. We have to cultivate this more than we do. The power of Satan may have been in that sickness of Epaphroditus; but God was above it in mercy. We see these links of heart of the apostle entering into his

epistles, except in Galatians when their hearts were getting away from the foundation. There we find even no salutations.

In Phil.3 we get the energy of that life which carries people clean out of the world. To walk well, we must have the characteristics of both chapters 2 and 3. If you see a person with one of these characteristics, without the other, it runs into carnality. The one is divine life coming down into the circumstances (ch.2); the other, divine glory carrying you clean out of the circumstances (ch.3).

The more we go on; the more we have to say to the Christianity of the world, or what the world calls such, the more we find that the testimony of Paul and of John is dropped in the professing Church. If a Christian is a person who has died with Christ, and is risen with Christ, he has nothing to do with this world at all, but to walk by faith through it and out of it. Hence we speak, of heavenly things— “our conversation is in heaven.” Our position in Christ now, is all but dropped in its true testimony. Hear the apostle in another scripture, “Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?” (Col.2:20). “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you” (Rom.8:9). “Ye are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world” (Col.2:20). It is very easy to say I am a religious man, but that is quite different to saying I am dead with Christ, and I am alive through Him, because that sets aside all thought of being a religious man. I must now walk as a son of God.

After Paul’s decease the church ceased to be heavenly, because it ceased to count itself as dead with Christ, and as risen with Him. Consequently the state of the Christian was not “Worshipping God in the Spirit.” To see people building up the flesh again, and giving it a place was what broke his heart.

Paul shows how if any one could boast in the flesh he could. A fleshly religion did not require man to be spiritual at all. He might be devoted in a certain sense in truth, and yet be the enemy of Christ. Paul was so himself. After all this Paul could say of himself, in a restricted sense, for it was true, that he was the chief of sinners! He

found fully the fact that the mind of the flesh was enmity against God. The Cross came and told of flesh, that there was no good thing in it. Then he says, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." Had He a right to say so—He who came to reveal the Father?

Do you think you can reveal God better than He could? Can you go into the world and say, It is to declare Him? Do you believe that at the Cross God tried His last means with man, and found the world wholly against God? Do you think Christ could link you now with anything in this world? You know He could not. How far has your heart taken up the Cross, and said, "I believe that the Son of God is rejected from this world; and, what is more; that it was my flesh did it!" Then you have "no confidence" in it. In the Cross is seen the excessive expression of enmity of the flesh against God; yet where the hatred and wickedness of man rose up and met God in goodness and grace, it was the occasion by which God gave expression to all the grace and love that was in His heart! You say "I am a poor sinner and Christ died for my sins."—True. That is where you learned love—the forgiveness of sins you were guilty of in the flesh." True. But He has taken you out of the flesh, and brought you into the place of God's child "in Christ," so that it can be said of you now, "As is the heavenly so are they also that are heavenly" — not now a child-of-Adam place, but that of a child of God.

Then, again, you can say to the world, If you want to know where my life is, it is "Hid with Christ in God." It shows how completely I am associated with the Lord Jesus Christ; and when He shall appear, I shall appear with Him in glory, for He is my life. It is put in a very striking way, and so I am to set my "affections on things above." I am in the body still, and have to go through the world, but if I look at my life, it is hid with Christ. Then you ought to seek, to, glorify Christ—in short, you ought to do nothing else.

An object before a man gives him energy. What madness, then, to let anything dim our sight. You can then say, "That I may know him." Is it your earnest desire to get acquainted with Him? Are you running on to that? Is Christ so your object that you are desiring to know Him?

You are going to be with Him forever—would you not like then, to know the perfect display of all that God is in a Man?—to know what governed His heart when in the world? No human mind can get at it, but the humble, heart feeds on Him, and grows like Him?

Are you getting more acquainted, then, with what will make you happy forever in heaven? or are you feeding on what shuts Christ out? What is hidden in your heart is the whole question. You say, "Oh! it is Christ who is at the bottom of my heart." It must be so, or you are not a Christian at all; but what is there between that and your outward walk? The news of the day—your business—things around? Not a bit of Christ comes out in them. Your heart is the highway of the things you meet with through the day.

The kind of joy that He had, necessarily involved sorrow in the world—it was the activity of love passing through everything here that caused it the deepest sorrow. Have we the same kind of feeling? Do we know in any sense in that way, what it is to have fellowship with Christ's sufferings; yet along with it all a positive joy from God? We know very little of outward suffering. "If we suffer with him we shall reign with him." It is not suffering for, but with. Love shows itself by being absolutely governed by a single object—it leads that way. Yes, but you say it will cost me my life. Very well, I say, I must go that way, my business is to win Christ. I have seen Him in glory—I must have Him. Just as Christ, "For, the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." My heart is so identifying itself with Christ—so conscious of divine favour as a present thing resting upon me—that when the wicked are in their graves I am gone to be with Christ, and to, be like Him forever! Having "Borne the image of the earthy;" I have gone to "bear the image of the heavenly."

In Romans we are looked at as "dead to sin" not "risen," but "alive to God." In Colossians a step farther, we are "dead with Christ," and "risen with Him." In Ephesians a step farther still, "Quickened together with Christ"—"raised up together." Seated together in Christ in the heavenlies. We have got into a new state and we have to

say, that is my place as a child of God; and I never can rest till I get there. I am not thinking of being like innocent Adam, but like the glorified Christ—I shall be when I see Him. A man sees a lamp at the end of a long straight path, and every step he takes towards it, the better he sees it; and so the nearer we come to Christ the more we see Him in all His brightness; but we are not actually at the end of the path. When we are we shall be conformed to the image of the Son, that He may be the first born among many brethren.

Redemption is a settled thing. I am redeemed out of the whole Adam condition; I have passed the Red Sea; and not only was the blood upon the door post, but I am brought out of Egypt with Him. Are you with Him? I have a great deal to learn to humble one, but I am with God! God says of Israel, "It is a stiff-necked people"; and that is the very reason Moses gave God as why He should go with them. So you may make it your plea and say, "Oh God, go with me; I never can be better; Thou must go with me!" The Holy Ghost has come down and united you with a risen and glorified Christ. This is actual practical power. Then you are down here, and your hearts will be tried and sifted; but it is because you are with God. You have got the key to it all now. You want to know distinctly and clearly that flesh can never be with God; it crucified Christ, and it won't have God—and God won't have it! Reckon yourself dead then; treat yourself as dead. You have a right to do it—it is the foundation of all your liberty and joy. If a converted man walks in the flesh, or seeks to have religiously to do with God in his flesh, he has a perpetual burden where God lays none.

We find in John 4, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Jesus says this to the outcasts; for He had left Judea where flesh had been in connection with God in a religious sense. Now true worship was to be in the Spirit: and if you are not there, you may confess your sins, but you are not worshipping God. Could you follow Christ in the praises He, as Man, is capable of singing now? He says, "In the midst of the congregation will I sing praise unto thee:" the praises of redemption accomplished—of righteousness

made good—of God made known. In this He had the first place, as in everything. You say you cannot—but you are going to take a place at a little distance from Christ. Yes, but remember, you have no place at all unless Christ gives you one. If you think you have, you are keeping up some of the rags of your own righteousness. You have no place, or you have Christ's place, and God has given us that. Have you learned His place? He puts the best robe on the prodigal, and makes the whole house sing. God does not say, "My prodigal is come back," but, "My son." It is the Father's glory to have him back. The question is, Is my heart at home in my Father's house? Is it at rest there? "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you,"—the heart knows it, and it has to go through the world and get sifted and tested day by day; but it is at home with God. It looks for a city—the rest of God. It is waiting for Christ till He shall come to take us to Himself. Blessed to have hold of the fact that I have died with Christ, "Nevertheless I live;" and that "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." I am with God, and I know Him, and so I can ask Him to go with me: just because I am such a poor thing. Does your heart trust God who spared not His own Son? then you say, "This one thing. I do, forgetting those things that 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." Keep your eye fixed on Him, and thus you will be able through grace to walk with Him—following hard after Him, you will find His right hand upholding you. He gives us, in His grace, to have our hearts identified with His interests; and He is not ashamed to call us brethren.

Let us, then, be "Like unto men that wait for their Lord," that when He comes we may open to Him immediately. "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching." He will "Make them sit down to meat," and will "gird himself," and "come forth and serve them!"

Philippians 3

Truth for the Last Days #3. Dublin, June 1873

Miscellaneous Writings, vol.4 p.224

This epistle gives us two practical characteristics of Christian life in which we find the true practical power of the life—the principle on which it passes through the world according to the mind of God. The Epistle is not doctrinal but, in it, we get the Christian path—Christian experience in the power of the Spirit of God. There is not a word about sin in it from beginning to end: but it sets out the Christian path in a person walking in the power of the Spirit.

The first characteristic is lowliness as in chapter 2: the second, the energy that leads a soul on, with Christ in glory as its object. This is the whole power. The basis of the whole thing is, that Christ is in the glory as man. It is a wondrous truth, that man—that is, the Lord Jesus Christ—is gone into heaven on the accomplishment of that work on the ground of which man could go in, hence as our Forerunner; and that the place that man has thus got in Christ is what the Holy Ghost always sets before our minds as our object.

All the great truths of God are found centred in the cross. Seeing a man in heaven sets man aside on the earth. We have got to pass through the world till Christ comes, and the question is how we walk down here till then. Of some the Apostle tells us weeping. We are looking for Christ to change our vile bodies. Till then we are not in the full result. That is what is set before our minds; but Christ is presented as already set down at the right hand of God, the distinct testimony of our accomplished salvation, and the blessing into which it brings.

Our calling is heavenly. Nothing is more important than our distinct apprehension that our calling is to be with Christ and like Christ where He is now. There is a full definite revelation of it all now. It is not merely that we are cleared of sin, but that God has a purpose about us which forms the object of the running here. “For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn

among many brethren.” The Cross was the turning point between that which tested man’s responsibility down here and God’s purpose concerning us. Before the world was, God had this purpose about believers, to have us there like His Son (Prov. 8). God, according to this purpose, would have us in this glory with His Son—the personal dignity of the Lord being always kept safe. You never find the saints said to be brought into this glory, without the guarding of His perfect excellency. The heart delights in preserving it.

Let me refer to one or two instances. In Matthew 3 Christ took His part with the remnant—going with His people in their first right step. Never till then was the heaven opened. At this moment the heaven was opened unto Him, and the Spirit of God came down, and the voice of the Father declared, This Man is My beloved Son. Now heaven was just as much open to Stephen: but mark the difference. When the heaven is opened over Christ, does He look up and see an object that changes Him into the same image? Not at all; heaven looks down upon Him. But this is just what Stephen does. Thus His person is kept safe, while Stephen gets as like Christ as the creature can.

So on the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elias appear in just the same glory as Christ; but the moment Peter would put them all together on the same level, they go away. He remains—the voice again declaring, “This is my beloved Son, hear him.”

But to return to these thoughts of God about us, in Matthew 3. Having put man into his proper place there is for the first time the revelation of the Trinity. There, where the fact of God’s Son taking His place as Man sets man into his proper place before God, all three Persons are revealed in connection with it. The more we enter into the thoughts God had about us, the more we see what poor worms we are. How could we ever have thought of being brought into this same glory as the fruit of His redemption? It shows how it is all grace, “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us in Christ Jesus.”

He brings these things before our souls now that our affections may be formed by them in living association with Him where He is. We want to walk through this world with our affections flowing from our connection, as new men, with the second Man, that is Heir of all, in heaven. He connects us with the Man that is there—Christ in heaven—the only accepted Man according to the counsels of God—by the Holy Ghost. God did not begin with the Man of His counsels; He gave promise of it in Eden, and it—becomes clearer and clearer afterwards. He began with the responsible Adam. All that probationary system is closed, in the setting aside of the old things altogether in the Cross. It closed the connection between God and the flesh, in spite of all that man—infidel and religious—can do to make something of it. That makes all the difference in our position. Now I have a fallen man—each of us adding our own sins to the heap—and a glorified Man. Am I walking on the principle of the fallen man, or the heavenly Man? I cannot do both. To walk as the heavenly Man is full blessed liberty of soul. The Cross made Christ say, “Now is the judgment of this world,” but Christ then said, “Now is the prince of this world cast out.” God did that work on the Cross; while men slew Him, it was “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” It was the triumph of Divine love, that through Christ’s work the counsels of God might be accomplished that put us into the same glory as Christ. The counsels were never brought out while that probationary system was going on, because the foundation for them was not laid. But the counsel “is now made manifest” (2 Tim. 1: 10: Tit. 1: 3). Hence we read, in 1 Corinthians 2: 7, “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery ... ordained before the world unto our glory,” but it did not come out. Again “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” People stop there, saying it is so wonderful and blessed we cannot know it. It is just the opposite, “God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit ... that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God.” Then we have three steps as to the revelation of these things. First revelation:

second, the inspired communication of them: third the spiritual reception; and this founded on a perfectly complete work. A Man has entered into the glory as our Forerunner, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. There is a difference between having our debts paid, and having all this glory before us. We might have our debts cleared and be without a farthing, but God gives us besides an inheritance of glory.

In John 13 Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him, if God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself." He does not wait for the royal manifested glory. The Holy Ghost comes down and puts us into connection with Christ in the glory of God, and the things that are around Him. That is the Christian position.

What becomes then of man's righteousness, if you are made the righteousness of God in Christ? The Cross puts an end to it altogether. It was just the attempt to maintain the legal righteousness that led Paul once to persecute the saints, and afterwards became his whole toil and burthen to oppose, The continual effort is to build up the first man again—in bold infidelity—but even in the Christian too. Whatever there is of it is a hindrance to the enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Cross has judged it all, broken down the whole thing, "He takes away the first that He may establish the second." We get it here, "We are the circumcision which ... rejoice in Christ Jesus and *have no confidence in the flesh.*"

What is confidence in the flesh? A very easy but a very foolish thing. It is the religion of the flesh. In verses 5 and 6 you get all that man was under the law. Who established it? God. Why then speak of it in this way? Because under that system they had crucified His Son. "If I had not come and spoken to them they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin ... now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." The Jews had promises and Christ was the fulfiller of them: He had come and they would not have Him, and the Jews were shut up in unbelief that they might come in under pure mercy just as the Gentiles.

Religion of the flesh is still man's confidence, because we do not know that we have no power, and we try to make out righteousness for God, instead of seeing God has made it out for us in a new way in a Man in glory. The Cross was the end of the trial of religion with man, to see if there was any good in him. But people say, "Ought I not to walk in this way?" You ought to have done it, but you are guilty under that system.

Here we have the religiousness of the flesh (not sin) which he calls concision—a name of utter contempt. That was the grosser thing, that was first set aside. But now he comes to "all things" and counts them loss for Christ. "That which was gain to me," that was the secret of it. If he was learned, who had the credit of it? Righteous—to whose credit was this? Paul's; but he says, I will not have "me." There is a totally new thing that God has set up—a Man in the glory of God as my righteousness, and the Spirit of God makes Him the object of my affections. "I am crucified with Christ ... and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." "Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people." What my heart wants is to have the Christ that has done it, in glory. "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." He says, "There is God's intention about me, now, in the settled certainty of that, I want Him in the glory as my object." Here he is speaking of what carries the heart on. The object of a man is what characterises him: if money, then he is covetous; if pleasure, then he is a man of pleasure; if power, then he is ambitious: he who follows after Christ is a Christian. Christ is the power and principle of his life here. Paul was walking down here but he had no other object in the world than to win Christ. Christ had laid hold of him to have him in the glory, and he wants to lay hold of that. What governs the Christian in his path is the Cross written on all down here, and Christ up there as the object.

"Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law." He does not say "Not having his sins," but his righteousness. Christ has obtained the glory. The law

would have been his righteousness down here: but doing what I ought to do would never give a title to be in the same glory as the Son of God. Why should it? But he will not have his own righteousness, "but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

"That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (verse 10). It is not that we are to seek suffering, but the cross was before him and he says "I will only be more like Christ; I have a life in Christ that is beyond death." As he says in 2 Corinthians 5. "We are always confident, knowing, that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." His place is all a settled thing: if killed he will only be with Christ. But he has not got it: it is his object.

He sets aside all that man is. The flesh, take it in all its best shew and colours, is all legal righteousness—fleshly righteousness. All is set aside.

Another thing has come in—not making the first man righteous, but—substituting the second Man for him.

His first object was to get Christ Himself; afterwards his own part in the blessing. Christ takes up the active open enemy against God. Not content to stop at home, like the chief priests, Paul goes to strange cities persecuting the saints, and then God stops him in sovereign grace, with a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, If it is a question of labouring for Christ, there will be different results; but if of glory, it is true of all saints as of Paul, predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son. If you believe in Him, He has obtained it for you.

Then he looks at that glory If it costs him his life, that is what he wants— "having a desire to depart and to be with Christ." There is no uncertainty. Cost what it will going through this hostile world—if it cost him his life—he says, "Well, I will be more like Christ," and he will have the conformity of His sufferings.

He was a man of one thought, one object, one purpose—"This one thing I do." All gain to him is loss, "I have suffered the loss of all things," but "I do count them but

ding." Not "I did count," but "I do count." It had not lost its present power. Do we count everything but loss for Christ? In Matthew 25 there is time left between the cry "Behold the Bridegroom" and the coming, to test the heart to see if Christ is everything. If we look around how often people talk of losing first love. It is that Christ has lost His first power over the heart. The world comes in in such a subtle way—and the things of it—and deadens the heart. The consequence is we begin at last to judge after the atmosphere we are living in. When Christ fills the heart the temptations are not there. It is the power of this new Object.

I turn now to what is connected with that, what Paul calls the perfect Christian. The thing set out before us is to be like Christ in glory. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, according to the eternal counsels of God. We are not that yet. "He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself even as He is pure." That supposes that the heart has understood this—not merely that my sins are put away, forgiven, but my place in Christ. Romans 5 and 8 give the contrast; "if any man be in Christ" is the new place I have got into. Not my sins blotted out—that is the first thing—but, "he is a new creation," belonging to this new world. This is what the Apostle earnestly insists on. I am not a debtor to the flesh—there speaking of its sinfulness. The point of that is "crucified *with* Christ," not Christ crucified for my sins merely, but I am a dead man. He takes this truth of our being crucified to put our hearts, and consequently our lives, where we are not in body yet—in complete association with the Man that is in heaven. The old man has been condemned. If I know my place then I put off the old man and put on the new. Where do I get the measure of it? "Which *after* God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Besides sins put away the cross of Christ has separated us from our existence in the flesh, sin, the world, and law; and risen with Christ, I have my place in life, and heart, and spirit, along with Christ, who has redeemed me to Himself in glory. "Our conversation is in heaven."

I add another thing; the same Spirit that dwells in Christ, dwells in us. People talk of being united by faith, Scripture never does. We get the Spirit and then we know that we are in Him and He in us. The soul gets hold of this by grace, and my part, my portion, and my place is with the Son of God, the second Man and not the first. The Cross closed the whole system of righteousness by law. I died and now belong, as having Christ as my life, to the place where He is; and the Spirit is given that I may know it. "Our conversation is in heaven." What am I waiting for? For Christ to come and put me there, every day seeking to be more like Him here.

You find a Christian first converted knows his sins forgiven. But if you want to be a Christian as God contemplates it, you are in the world but not of it as He is not, you are in Christ. That is the reason why God puts us constantly through trials and difficulties, that God may make all this real to our souls. "Always bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our body."

"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: ... who mind earthly things." The Cross has put entire contempt upon them. If I look for the glory of God, where do I find divine dealing with sin, infinite divine love? In the Cross. That is what has put an end on God's part to everything connected with man—pretension to righteousness, recoverableness, everything, save the body left to be the vessel of the manifestation of the life of Christ.

"Our citizenship is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." We are left here like the man with the legion of devils, sent to his friends that they might know what great things the Lord had done for him. We look for the Lord Jesus Christ *as Saviour*, to do the one thing that remains to be done, to change our vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Then all will be complete. He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied then.

Christ has come and given Himself for us that He might purify us to Himself. The Cross was the test of infinite love. And what we have to look for is that love of Christ to come and take us to Himself. If a Christian understands that he is done with the old man, he has to learn to grow up to the stature of Christ. There is no other full growth of the Christian but that. As to mind and faith he gets into the full grown state. The thing is to be attained in glory, we cannot say we have attained, but can we say "This one thing I do." If a man has only seen forgiveness yesterday he has got to walk according to the same rule. To be forgiven and know it, is blessed of course; but can you say you are doing one thing?

People talk a deal about perfection, but they have lost the sense that perfection is to be as Christ in glory.

Can you say that your citizenship is in heaven, your righteousness in Christ, the associations of your heart with Christ, everything there? Infidelity is stalking abroad, ritualism is in high places. Can you say I have no confidence in the flesh? Divine righteousness is in heaven, but the Cross has written death upon all below upon earth, and all association with it. We find our imperfection every day, but is the ruling object of our souls Christ? Are you looking for Christ? You cannot say when He will come. It is carefully not revealed, to keep you watching. But whenever the Lord speaks of it, He never puts it beyond the life of the people that were then living. He never presents another thing to their thoughts. In the parable of the virgins, those that awoke at the midnight cry were the same that fell asleep while He tarried. He wakes them up and then He comes, but stays sufficient time to test hearts as to how far He is everything. If He were to come to-night, would your hearts be saying, Oh that is what I am looking for? Do you love His appearing? Would it be the joy of your heart to say, "Oh there He is, and I am to spend eternity in the glory with Him"? You cannot expect joy unless you are looking for the Lord to come. The Cross put an end to all fleshly religion, and earthly things, and Christ becomes the bright blessed Object: while the love of Christ lays hold of, sustains, and comforts the

heart, and gives us the consciousness that nothing can separate us from it.

Philippians 3—The Effect of Christ in Glory

Food for the Flock, vol.4 p.282 [1877]

Collected Writings, vol.27, p.231

Collected Writings, vol.32 p.347

There are two ways in which we may look at the Christian: one, according to the counsels and thoughts of God, and the efficacy of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; “by one offering perfected for ever”—accepted in Christ Himself before God, everything that stood against us put away, and the believer cleared completely and for ever from his old condition in Adam, taken out of that old condition, and put into the acceptance of Christ Himself; this is the grace wherein we stand. But evidently there is also another condition in which the Christian is seen, and that is as walking in this world.

This walk of the Christian we get in two ways—in the Epistle to the Philippians and in Hebrews. In Hebrews it is looked at in respect to the grace Christ obtains for us as priest on high; not the operation of the Spirit in us, but the work of Christ for us, and grace to help in time of need. But if in Hebrews you get the Christian down here in weakness, needing help and getting it, in Philippians you get him down here, and the energy and power of the Spirit of God working in him. We have to pass through the world, and there are difficulties in our path, temptations to draw us aside; but one walking in the power of God’s Spirit rises above all the difficulties in the midst of which he is. In Philippians is brought out the power of God’s Spirit acting in our walking in the right path, and the result is a person entirely above it all, one who can “rejoice in the Lord always.” We may remember, too, that Paul had been four years in prison at the time, two of them with a soldier chained to him; and, what was still more trying, his work as an apostle put a stop to, his activity all come to an end. He might have reproached himself as to going up to Jerusalem, and so on, but he does not; he rises above it all.

It is a remarkable fact that in this epistle sin is never spoken of; nor is the flesh, except as having no confidence in it, in a warning to avoid its religiousness; it is simply a walk in the power of the Spirit. In the previous chapter you get the graciousness, but in this the energy, of the course—the full energy of the Christian going through this world. He does not here speak of the cross as that which puts away sin; it has another character here, being looked at practically; it is being “crucified to the world.” Thus it is the book of experience, according to the spirit of the Christian on earth.

Imprisoned, so that he cannot be active, yet Paul says, It will all turn to my salvation; it will all turn to good, and I can rejoice in the Lord always. This comes with power when we remember where he was when he could write thus. He looks back and contrasts his own course with that of those who had made profession, but were still going on with the world.

Let us first look at the character of the energy with which the apostle ran this race. He says he has not yet attained, is not yet perfect; this is because he is looking at his state. We must just see what he means by this. In the first place, he has not a thought of his own righteousness at all. There was a righteousness which he had had; there was a righteousness which he had boasted in; he had had it, all that which depended on himself: “touching the righteousness which was in the law, blameless.” But the moment the spiritual character of the law was seen, it was all over; all that flesh could trust in was gone for him. We all know how when he was in the full flush of his career, the Lord met him, and he discovered that all that had been gain to him, all of which he had boasted, had only served to bring him into open enmity with God. All this knowledge, all this energy of character, he had only made use of to try to destroy the name of Christ. It was not a question of his sins; it was that all he had valued as good was gone, his conscience proved to be misdirected, his legal righteousness nothing worth. There, on his way to Damascus, with authority from the high priest, he found himself in the presence of Christ, and in open enmity with Him; and in that presence all that he was as a religious

man, “blameless”—in the outward sense, of course, for he found himself to be the chief of sinners—all that Saul could clothe himself with outwardly was smashed, and he himself left to dwell in darkness three days, to go through in his own soul what this terrible revelation had discovered to him. The practical effect of thus seeing the Christ in glory was to put down in the most powerful way all that was of man. The first thing we need as sinners, and get through the cross of the Lord Jesus, is “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins”; but here it was not sins—it was righteousness put away. What he had stood in before God was all gone; it was brought out in the strongest way in his own experience what man was in his best estate: the upright, honest, law-keeping Pharisee was only enmity against God. And it was not only that he had failed—this was not the thing—but that the whole structure, the moral structure of man, was brought out in the sight of God and done with. It was the end of the first man; and this not as a doctrine, but practically, for we must learn everything in our own consciences if it is to be a real thing. It was total, entire condemnation of man in the flesh in his best form; the best man in the world was the chief of sinners—best as man goes. This, evidently, is a truth that we can learn in different ways, either as seeing ourselves open sinners in rebellion against God, or by discovering that what we esteem best is utterly valueless before Him. Innocence is gone; man fell from paradise, and that is all over. There is no going back to the tree of life; and from that time forward man must be either an alien from God, an enemy in his mind by wicked works, or else he must have a heavenly place with God. On the road to Damascus, Saul meets the Man in the glory, and then he is judged in his own conscience, and is found to be an open ceaseless enemy of God. It is easy for us to see that our sins must be judged by God, but we do not see at first that the mind and affections of the flesh are enmity against Him. But here you see there is an end of Saul, and of everything that the flesh was in this world—this world which was not paradise, and certainly was not heaven—this world in which the good things were worthless in the sight of God, and certainly the sins were not any use.

Outwardly, Saul was the best man possible—as man goes—conscientious, religious, righteous; and there he was an open enemy against God. There was nothing to be found here: consequently he looked out of this world and saw Christ in glory; he saw Him there where he stood; and the effect was that the old man was perfectly judged, and there was **another Man in heaven**. All that Saul was was gone. **It is not a question of sins, but of righteousness**. In another place he says, “I had not known sin but by the law.” But supposing there were a righteousness according to the law, no man ever reached it except the blessed Lord Himself; but even if Paul could have reached it, he would not have it now, for he says, I have got another; there was “the righteousness of God” for him now. The law required righteousness from man to God, but that was now all given up; besides, none had attained it. **It is, “not having mine own righteousness”; he does not say, not having my-own sins**. It goes a great deal farther than that, and I press it on you—theoretically, a man blameless; yet he says, I will not have it at all. The whole standing, place, and condition of the first man is a judged thing in his soul, and another Man, Christ in glory, shall be for him, not that which he was. The condition of the first man has been shewn out by the revelation of the second Man, and Paul follows Him. Thus we see the whole ground and standing of legal righteousness swept away. Nobody had it, of course: still that was altogether the ground he was on; but now, he says, I will not have my own at all, for I have got Another.

You cannot have the two before God. Seeing this sets aside a thousand things that are floating in the world. A man will have perfection nowadays; he says, I will not go on sinning. And he is quite right: he has no right to go on sinning. But God would not thank me for my righteousness, not when I clothe myself in an Adamic robe, for I have got another thing altogether in Christ. Paul does not speak here of his position in Christ; it is not here: “There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”; it is the condition of soul of those who possess this “no condemnation.” And the condition of Paul’s was that the revelation of Jesus Christ had set aside

in him all that was of himself; it was the righteousness of God that he had, and that does not go from man to God, but from God to man. When did the prodigal get the best robe? When the Father put it on him. "I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] dwelleth no good thing." The whole nature, the character, and the quality of it is a judged thing. But mark, when this Christ was revealed, his mind, and heart, and desire never stop short of reaching Him, and then what happens? Away goes all your perfection here. He says, The glory I saw in Damascus; that is what I want. It was no longer the judgment of the old man—it was the hopes of the new.

He says to him, "I am Jesus of Nazareth." There was no longer any question about it; that Man was there in the glory—the carpenter's son—the One whom they had rejected. They all fell down at the glory of that light, though they knew not what it meant. And in that light Paul was totally and entirely condemned and done with; Christ took the place of everything. All that he had counted gain was gone. Supposing he were a learned man—well, to whom was that gain? To Paul, not to Christ; it is only building up, and furnishing, and giving credit to, and adorning, that old thing which has been judged as enmity against God.

And it is not only "I counted," but he has gone on with Christ; he adds, "I do count," as a present thing. All that I esteemed best—righteousness, learning, birth, everything—"I do count them but dung," for I have seen Christ and I want Him, and the things of this world I count nothing. He has revealed Himself to me in grace; He has proved His love to be above all my enmity, and now I must have Him. Paul was a man whose whole course and career were marked by an object that was before him; and it is the object that is before us that marks our course, and gives it its moral character. Paul followed after Christ. Let us ask ourselves, Are we following Christ in this way? Is this what governs us? I do not say we may not be distracted, but is He the object after which we are running? We cannot have two at the same time. Has there been such a revelation of Christ to our hearts that we have Him as the only object before us?

And I will ask here—for it is very current in some places, called “higher life,” and truly alas! for so many Christians follow the world—what is true Christian life? It is “higher life,” and no mistake, for our calling is a “calling above”—that and no other; I have no calling to anything down in this world. There is no calling for the Christian according to the word of God but the calling to a risen and glorified Christ. What is put before us is a glorified Christ; we are going to be like Him; and you cannot have a right object except as that object is a glorified Christ, because that is the only Christ. Christ down here is a pattern for our walk, but there is no such Christ now to attain to. I cannot win Christ down in this world, because there is no Christ to win. Attempting it only lowers the standard of holiness, and, instead of being “higher Christian life,” it is lower. It is the hope of being like Him in glory that makes a man now “purify himself even as he is pure.” The object, that I get before my soul in this race that he speaks of, is a glorified Christ, and that only; that is what I am going to attain to; I am going to be like the Christ that I have seen. Whatever progress Paul made, he was so much the nearer to Him, but he had not got Him; he would only get Him when in his glorified body. There is no other Christ to run after or win; not that our affections do not cling to Him in humiliation, but it is a glorified Christ only who is the object of our hearts. I may get to heaven now in spirit, and be happy there with Him, but I never attain to Him, I never win Him, until I am with Him in the glory; it is then I shall have won Christ.

When all that was Paul was judged, it brought him into all kinds of difficulties; for instance, now he was going to be tried for his life; but he had done with Paul—he had the sentence of death in himself. Many may not—none perhaps—so realise it as he did; but the consequence was, he was always “bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” so that the life of Jesus was made manifest in his body. He had the sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself, but in God, who raises the dead; that is, he says, The God I know has raised Christ from the dead, and therefore I am not afraid of death, of

trial, of anything that may come on the road: I can glory in it all.

It is not only patience and hope as in Romans; here it is "the fellowship of his sufferings." We are always called on to suffer with Him here. We hardly know what it is to suffer for His sake—a little trial perhaps now and then; but to suffer with Him we do know, for we cannot go through this world of sin and sorrow without suffering in principle what the heart of Christ suffered. We can rejoice in the saints when they are going on well, but there is nothing else in it to rejoice anyone; it is only the world that crucified Christ, except, of course, poor sinners, and he must speak to them; that is all he saw in the world.

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." That does not imply doubt; but he says, Even if death be on the road, I will go through it, and I shall only be made like Him if I die. Here I get the apostle fixed on an object—Christ in glory, and nothing short of it; and here he will have suffering with Christ, let it cost him life and everything, if but only he may get this place—part in the first resurrection; for he is looking at it here not as our position, but as attainment. It may be a bad road that I tread, but I get refreshment by the way, and it is the road Jesus travelled.

[3:12] "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after." There is the activity of the life. In these days, when people are giving up Christianity on all sides, it is well to know what Christianity is. Christianity is perfect peace, and reconciliation with God: we are perfected for ever before Him; and as regards the path in this world, it is the eye on Christ Himself in glory, and one undivided energy to get after Him. Every step we take we get more of Christ, and are more capable of knowing Him, and thus the effect is practically to form one into His likeness. This bringing in of the life of Christ to my soul enables me to see Him in the glory, so that even now I get more like this resurrection I am aiming after. The resurrection from among the dead identifies itself with winning Christ; raising from the dead speaks to us God's perfect delight in us as in Christ.

[3:15] Then he speaks of perfection: "As many as be perfect." A perfect Christian is a full-grown man, in one sense; it is the same word as the "perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." And what is that? It certainly is not being like what Christ was when He was down here, for there was no sin in Him, so the thought of being like Him is a mere delusion. He that gazes on Him up there walks like Him down here, but to be like Him as He was down here is not possible. To walk like Him, I repeat, is said; but to be like Him would be to be absolutely sinless. To be conformed to Him in glory, that we shall be, and therefore the heart desires and runs after it now; and that is what he calls a perfect Christian. It is not one who knows what it is to have got the sins of the old creation cleared away—it is not knowing the work of Christ which puts away sin, hardly measured either by the sin, for it is the whole state of the nature; all is settled, and I know that "by one offering he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified," that there is no more a question of anything to be settled between me and God, and I have liberty before Him in the sense of His favour; but then I say, Is that all? All my debts paid, but am I to have nothing to go and buy anything with? Am I henceforth to starve, without possessing a farthing? Then it is that the soul comes to see that, having part in this forgiveness, it has also part with the last Adam: he has got hold by grace of this Man in the glory, and knowing this, I say, my whole soul is in that; I have seen the excellency of Christ Jesus, my Lord, and it has set aside everything here. I have done with it all; I belong to another place, and no longer own this old man.

It is then the Christian has got to be what he calls a perfect man; he has this object before him, he has got Christ's place before God, and he grows up into the stature of Christ; not that he has not still much to learn, but he has got into his place; he is of full age, he discerns good and evil, he has got hold of his place in Christ, and he knows it. This sets aside the flesh altogether, and also that which is a deceptive thing to many, perfection in the flesh, for Christ in glory is my only perfection. In the world I am

running a race, I have not attained yet, but Christ has laid hold of me for it.

[3:15-16] He then puts in the strongest contrast those who are not thus perfect: "If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." I can walk with one who only knows his redemption in Christ with just the same love, but I look for him to get hold of this also.

Then he talks of another thing, of those who have the profession of Christianity, but who are "enemies of the cross of Christ"; they are not exactly enemies of Christ, though in the end it comes to the same thing. In paradise God got rid of man as a sinner; at the cross, as far as his will was concerned, man got rid of God in grace. The very disciples ran away: they could not stand it; as He said to Peter, "Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards." Amiable or unamiable, all either ran away or banded themselves together against Him. Satan was proved to be the prince of this world. People fancy he is not the prince of it, because the gospel is preached in it; but the gospel never would be preached in it if he were not the prince of it; He brought all the world up against Christ, so the world is judged, and all that is in it. "The world is crucified to me." The cross—really a gibbet—put an end to all human glory. He came down to that to put an end to everything of man. There is no such infamy as the cross; nothing but a slave or a bad criminal was ever put upon it. Thus Satan was proved by his influence over the world to be its prince; such is what the world is, and this is the very reason that the Lord says, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee"; and therefore the world is convinced of judgment, and righteousness is proved, how? "Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool," is God's answer. And He sits there till the judgment of the world is to be executed; it sees Him no more as the Saviour. And now, because He glorified God in that place of sin, we carry out the testimony of the grace that seeks sinners.

These were enemies to the cross of Christ. They carry the name of Christian and go on with the world. Of course, the true Christian may get into the world and be ensnared; it is not that. The enemy of the cross of Christ put Christ there, and now if I look for righteousness, it is not to be found in the world that did that; I must look for it in Christ up there, for righteousness has done with the world.

Then see the place that he puts the Christian in: "for our conversation is in heaven"; our whole relationships in life—all that my life is involved in, and develops itself in—are in heaven; I am to run here having all my relationships up there, because Christ who is my life is up there. What a definite thing the Christian life is—not here at all!

[3:20] "From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Now what is He called "Saviour" for here? Christians are all saved in a certain sense—we have eternal life: but in this epistle salvation is the result of redemption, not merely redemption. Practically, Israel was saved out of Egypt as soon as the Red Sea was crossed, but they had not got the place till they had got through the Jordan too. We get in the Red Sea Christ's death and resurrection. The blood upon the lintel gave them safety while God was passing through, destroying the first-born: the question between God and the people as to their sin was settled, still God was in the character of judge there, and He passes them by. Yet it was not deliverance. But when they come to the Red Sea He says, "Stand still, and see the salvation of God." God had now come in as a Saviour and taken them out of the place they were in, and now they are delivered. When I get to Jordan, it is yet another thing; the waters open not to bring them out, but to bring them in; not that Christ was dead and risen for them, but that they were dead and risen with Christ. So you get the Red Sea smitten, so to say, whilst in Jordan the ark stays in the water and we go through with it. The reproach of Egypt was never rolled away till they got into Canaan; and so with us: I do not get deliverance and full power in heavenly places until I see that I have died and risen with Christ; I do not get into my place until then.

Now have you got there, beloved friends? If so, all your desire will be there, and you will be longing to be there too. Christ is there, and the Christian's heart is with Christ, his affection is in heaven, and he looks for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives character to the Christian as one who has seen Christ in the glory, and who says, That is my hope; my citizenship is in heaven, and here in this world all I am to do is to run after Him as fast as ever I can to get there.

[3:21] And my hope is not to die, blessed though this be, but to look for the Saviour, "who shall change this vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." We are running the race towards the place where our standing is. We are in Christ, but this is not the thing here. Got it we have; but how far does the cross really tell us the tale of what we are? Not only that our sins, but that we ourselves are put away. Can you say with the apostle, "The life which I now live in flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God?" Is there nothing in the circumstances down here by which we live? We must go through them, but are we living by them? Are we living to Him in that sense? There are many Christians who have no distinct idea that they are to take up their cross and follow Him. May we learn that the times press! May our hearts so really look at Christ that we may be in conscious relationship with Him, our affections there with Him, and because they are there, looking for Him to come from heaven to change this vile body because it will not suit that place! Where are our hearts? Have we the deep blessed sense that He has associated us with Himself? "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."

The Lord give us so to have our eye on Him, that we may have all the blessedness of the consciousness that He has taken us to be with Himself in His unutterable love, and that we may thus know real deliverance from the power of sin and the world. The Lord fix our eye on Him with steadiness and earnestness of heart, so that we may say with David, "My soul followeth hard after thee."

This chapter forms a kind of parenthesis, an important one, too, and full of matter, as Paul's parentheses always are. Redemption puts Christians upon a wonderfully new footing. It takes them out of man's place as such altogether, though they are still down here, and it puts them before God in a new condition and state as the result of that redemption. True, they await the adoption, the redemption of the body; they groan, being burdened as long as they are here; but the more we look into it, the more we shall see that the cross is the passage out of one state into another, as well as the putting away of sins. I speak, of course, of Christians.

We have been brought to God according to the efficacy of God's working, connected with our being quickened, and with the full character of our being risen with Christ. It is a new state as well as a new life, for we have passed the Red Sea.

The expression, "Worship God in the spirit," has led me to this. As in John 4, "Ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." All human standing with God is gone. Jerusalem was a standing with God, but man could never make anything of it; yet it was there, though **to** no purpose as regards the state man was in. Its very character was manifest in that the veil was there, and man could not see God. But redemption rends the veil and puts man right into God's presence, so that now, through the cross, we have passed into the light that is on God's side of the cross; and there we worship in spirit.

Circumcision leads to this. As in Colossians, we are buried and risen again, putting off the body of the flesh (not, the sins of), through death; this is true circumcision. We are the circumcision, if we have really put off our place, that is, the old man. All is gone.

He says "concision," treating the Jewish thing with contempt. We have no confidence in the flesh; he does not say, wickedness, but flesh, and that which he here calls "flesh" is religious flesh, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, etc. He will not call it circumcision. This is a great thing to get

hold of. In Corinthians, it goes a great deal further, for besides the new creature, we have there a new creation, which means that the old thing has been dealt with; now all is of God. Of course, we are of God, but this is as belonging to the new creation; He has created us again in Christ Jesus.

We find, then, these two things: a new nature (and creature, too, in that sense), and a wholly new scene to which we belong now. It is not this world, but a new creation; Corinthians includes all this.

Christ had a place in the old creation, that is to say, He came into it in grace, but, when there, men would not have Him. Had He been received, He would have been, so to speak, the keystone of the arch of an impossible bridge. But now that He has risen, He has become the centre of the new creation. Just as Adam became the head of a race after he sinned, so Christ has become Head of a race after He has risen. The new creation is founded on Christ's death.

The result for us is that of our complete acceptance before God upon this new ground, standing, and state; and then comes the question of the practical effect of this upon us.

"All things of God"! Well then, God has, of course, no fault to find with me. But then again, if I am of God, I have nothing more to do with this world. Every Christian would own that he must have a new life; but I do not think it is always realised by us that Christ has died to this creation, and that He has begun another one.

Not merely am I renewed in mind with a new nature; but I have passed through the Red Sea, and I do not belong to Egypt at all. Our bodies do, of course, left here as they are, but I am speaking now of our place in Christ.

This is why the apostle declaims against the enemies of the *cross* of Christ, those who mind earthly things, because the cross of Christ has passed its sentence upon everything on earth. The world is crucified to me, and I to it.

If I had obtained righteousness under the old system, it would have been of man, but of course I could not thus

obtain it. Under that system the law was a perfect rule for man.

But Christ having wrought the work that has glorified God, if in Him we had not a place in the new creation, God would not be righteous, for then Christ would not reap the fruit of the travail of His soul. Under law, man could only give man's righteousness, but now it is God's righteousness by faith, and, if by faith, it is not in myself, though afterwards there will be no doubt the fruits of righteousness.

Righteousness of God is revealed; it is an object which is before me, and I believe in it. This righteousness has been displayed to faith in the setting of Christ at God's right hand, where it is now publicly testified, and from whence we have the administration of it; and thus our Lord speaks "of righteousness, because I go to my Father." Clearly, therefore, it is outside of man, for it is Christ's work thus actually owned by God. Then the Holy Ghost comes down and says, 'True, that all are sinners, but all is settled.' Therefore, the apostle does not here talk about 'having my sins,' but, setting aside the old system, he speaks of "not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law."

He had done with the question of his own righteousness, and with the whole thing upon which this rested. Outwardly "blameless" he might have been, but now he is in another place altogether through the work accomplished on the cross. And Christ, of God, is made unto us, wisdom and righteousness, etc.

Thus we learn that the question of our standing with God is entirely settled. If Christ is made righteousness of God to us, 'well then,' I say, 'all is settled for me now according to God's own mind.'

And this links us with what is heavenly, because Christ is there. He has deserved the glory as man. Righteousness is connected with the finished work of Christ, and this brings in life, and then we go practically from life to righteousness. Looked at as "in Christ," we begin from His work, and we go on to life. Christ accomplished the work before He became the Head of a new race.

By obtaining life, I learn next my place in this righteousness of God; I am sanctified unto the blood of sprinkling.

When I am quickened, I am brought into the value of a work already done. But if a person is looking back or within to see if he is quickened, he will never find peace. When brought to that estimate of the flesh, whereby he sees the whole system as rotten, and condemned, and done with ("now the judgment of this world"), then he no longer looks at it with reference to his standing with God. With such a one it is now all Christ. Then there is no cloud upon the light of God's countenance, because it is God's satisfaction with His work.

It makes it most distinct when I see Adam as head of his race, after he had sinned, and Christ as Head of a new race after He had accomplished His work. The question of life and responsibility, and of the incompatibility between the two has been settled at the cross. Arminianism and Calvinism, i.e., the tree of grace and the tree of man's responsibility, are both found in Paradise, nor can we reconcile these two things in man, except it be in Christ.

The law took up this same question, and made responsibility to be the ground of life: "This do, and thou shalt live"; there again we have life and responsibility put together, but responsibility comes first as testing man.

Well, Christ then comes and charges Himself with both the responsibility and the failure, and He settles the whole question so that life now comes first.

It would have been all right, in one sense, had Adam eaten of the tree of life, but this was not to be.

But, by taking us out of the whole former condition, Christ becomes our life.

Redemption has taken us out of the place in which we were responsible, I speak now as to our standing before God. By redemption, this question has been settled perfectly and for ever.

Every intelligent creature, such as angels and all else, is, of course, responsible as set in that position. So when we have to say to God through Christ, we are in a place of

responsibility to glorify God according to the perfect law of liberty. We have to show out this life of Jesus in this mortal body, because we have got the life. Condemnation is for sinners who are in a lost state. If a man is judged, he is judged for his works; but, besides this, he is in a lost state.

It all goes together, though, as a matter of fact, man is lost to begin with. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Redemption takes me out of that state; I am delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And this blessing we have in our poor bodies here; burdened and groaning we may be truly; but we have been brought to the full and thorough conviction that the old man is an evil thing, and that we have been redeemed out of it. Still, we need to have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

An angel delights to serve like Christ, not as perfectly, of course, but it is his nature so to do; and as regards the new man abstractedly, we delight also to do His will. Along with this, there may be with us a great deal of darkness, a will that has to be broken; there is much for us to learn, and much to humble us in ourselves. And oh! how very soon this shews itself, if we are not watchful.

Nothing but the sense of the presence of God can keep us in self-judgment; we may be ever so sincere, but self is not judged except in the presence of God.

We may not be always conscious of it, whilst seeking to do the right thing; but let something turn up, and we find flesh is still alive!

But when the presence of God is realised, the practical state of the soul is totally different; there is then a sense of dependence, and of lowliness, and of nothingness which we only learn in God's presence.

A matter comes before a man in his service as a Christian, and he sets about to judge it; he seeks to do this thoroughly according to God's mind; but self gets set in motion, and then it is detected whether he has been with God about it.

Ques. I suppose you would say that a Jew never was in God's presence?

Not as a principle, and therefore the Jew never could judge himself; one could never find in him, for instance, a consciousness of the two natures; conscience of sins truly, and we read that "I was shapen in iniquity," for without a sense of this, in some degree or other, there never could have been any saints at all. But if quickened, they walked on the earth with piety in their lives, and they had blessed revelations of God on the earth.

So Abraham talks with God, and God comes down to his tent door, and sits at table with him, but it is to him as on the earth; so in the cloud at the door of the tabernacle, God talks with Moses, but that is not taking Abraham and Moses up into heavenly places.

I have no doubt they looked forward in hope, but there was no dwelling of God with man until redemption had been brought in, not even in figure. God never dwelt with Adam; neither did He dwell with Abraham, nor with Moses; after He had brought Israel out of Egypt, then He speaks of dwelling among them, and we see in this the fruits of redemption, though in an earthly way, of course.

So now He redeems us, and then dwells with us.

Ques. Except as He sanctified the seventh day, one never finds even holiness in Genesis?

No.

Ques. But surely Abraham is in heaven?

Oh, yes; I believe Abraham to be in heaven, of course, but, in speaking of the revelations and instructions of God, we do not find God dwelling with man until redemption comes in.

Ques. There seems to be a difficulty with some as to the character of God's dwelling now in the Church as a whole; they think it is limited to those who are members of the body of Christ. Can you help such?

It is quite true as to the individual, but God does dwell in the Church. As for mere professors being there, it would be a denial of the apostasy to limit His dwelling to the body of Christ. Strictly speaking, God does not dwell in

the body; the body is looked at as united to Christ on high, and each individual believer, as having the Holy Ghost, is in the body of Christ. We are members of Christ's body. That is as down here, on the earth; but then there is another thing: "Builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit." But suppose false brethren creep in, as in Jude, no one could say that the Holy Ghost had ceased to dwell in the assembly because false ones had come in.

I do not speak of the Holy Ghost dwelling in any particular local assembly at all.

The moment I speak of Christians as members of the body of Christ, I speak of them individually, and I have lost the idea of "house."

Ques. But at the first, was it not the same?

Yes; it was set up all right at the first, but it had not then become like a "great house." Though, remember, the great house in 2 Timothy is only a comparison.

But when false brethren were brought in unawares, the Holy Ghost did not leave in consequence; nor does He go, until the time of judgment comes.

The Shekinah was in the temple until the time of the captivity at Babylon, but not afterwards.

We see how the prophet Ezekiel saw them weeping for Tammuz; then, worse still, he saw them worshipping the sun; through the hole dug in the wall he saw the images portrayed, and he found things getting only worse and worse. Could God spare such a nation? So He goes up with the cherubim and leaves the nation altogether. Now, God has not done that, as yet, with the Church. The Church has departed from Him, but He has not executed judgment upon it, and therefore blessing still continues under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

But towards the close of Paul's ministry, the present state was fast developing. I was struck, lately, in noticing how all the catholic epistles, as they are called, speak of the evil as already come in.

And where evil is, God must come to judge it. Even the epistle to the Hebrews is no exception. But what struck me, was the universality of this in the catholic epistles.

Suppose we had only received instructions for a good state of the Church, we should not know what to do nowadays. It is just the not seeing the provision that has been made which leads, of course, to the confusion of the present time.

But God is working, I trust, amid the present state of distraction in the Church. Yet at such a time it is, that all sorts of false things are set up, sometimes by man's wit, and sometimes by Satan. And honest souls are trying to satisfy themselves with utter worldliness; consciences are troubled about it, and saying we must have a higher life, and so on, and very earnest souls some of these are.

Ques. Would you object to speak of the present place of profession as the house of God?

It is not called the house of God in 2 Timothy, yet that is its place of responsibility, whatever may be its place of profession; responsibility rests upon it, because of the presence of the Holy Ghost. It is contemplated as God's building, in 1 Corinthians; but, although built in part of wood, hay, and stubble, the building still belongs to God. Just as I may say, that is my house, though I may have a bad bricklayer working upon it among the rest.

Ques. Is it not doctrine that is there spoken of?

Yes, in 1 Corinthians it is, but then people brought it in. It has nothing to do with our works.

When the profession is cast off, the apostasy will go further. This is the true character of apostasy. The principle of it is already at work, though it will not come to its head until the true Church has gone. The mystery of iniquity began to work in Paul's time; and it is still working, and will do so until Christ comes.

As long as people thought the pope was antichrist, they called Romanism the apostasy.

Ques. "As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists"?

Yes, "antichrists," i.e., the spirit of the thing is already there, but it has not yet come fully out.

The professing Church not being yet apostate, anybody who cuts himself off from the Church is apostate, properly

speaking, for it is now a thing that can be apostatised from.

Ques. In what light do you regard Swedenborgianism?

Well, it is not Christianity at all; it is difficult to speak of such a thing. God will judge about it.

Ques. What as to Mormonism?

I suppose they called themselves Christians once. Their doctrine is this, that, supposing the people are married for all eternity, and have children all through eternity, and supposing the world that they are in gets too full, they, by faith, create another world, and he who so creates, is the god of the world he creates; and he packs off part of his children there; and so they believe that the One whom we call God and Father, is One who has created this world, and packed us off into it.

It is somewhat difficult to call that apostasy, though there may be individuals among them who were once professing to be Christians, but who have apostatised. What I have just said, I have from some of their own writings in my possession.

Professing to call Jesus, Lord, is the great thing that characterises Christianity.

Ques. What is, “partakers of the Holy Ghost”?

It refers to the Holy Ghost now present in power, without having anything to do with being born again.

Ques. What of Bishop Colenso?

Well, is he not denying the testimony of the Word of God? And that is bare infidelity.

Individuals may be apostate at any time. As long as the Church remains, there is a professing thing on the earth that is not apostate. Laodicea is therefore called by the name church, though it will be afterwards spued out of His mouth.

In Philippians, we get more the individual running: “This one thing I do.”

Ques. What would be, “being made conformable unto his death”?

The apostle was looking to be killed; he carried, in spirit, the sentence of death in himself.

Ques. Does it, then, refer to martyrdom?

Yes. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus" was, with the apostle, the taking up the "sentence"; but in the next verse, "delivered unto death," it was God doing this with him. We have the two things in Corinthians; he was "bearing about," and then, he was "delivered unto death"; this latter is because we cannot always be trusted to do the thing honestly.

The apostle really was, as much as any one, always holding himself dead; but the being delivered unto death, was God dealing with him for his good, but he required God's hand to hold him fast.

Ques. How far can Christians now take that up?

Everybody must answer for his own conscience. I do not know who could say that absolutely: "always," is a very awkward word. If one does not hold that he is dead to the world, he is not really on Christian ground at all. It is a difficult thing to say, 'my flesh never budges,' but I speak of the Christian principle of life. Paul says, "Death worketh in us, but life in you." 'I am so completely dead, that Paul never appears to you Corinthians, but only Christ; death works in me, but life, Christ's life, in you.' Wonderful practical state Paul was in!

Take again this epistle. Sin, as to experience, is never once mentioned in it; but we have the experience of a man walking in the power of the Spirit of God, and with salvation, too, always before him, running the race towards the prize; even justification was before him, as he says, "that I may ... be found in him." At the end of the race he will find everything. Yet he could not have been running the race if Christ had not laid hold on him. Salvation, here, is final deliverance in glory. It is this that puts down perfection, for he had seen Christ in glory, and knew that he should be like Him. I would not thank you for your perfection, if you are looking to be as Adam was in the garden of Eden. I am looking to be like Christ. As one said in France, 'They are looking to be perfects, but we look to be pluperfects.' Perfection is seen in this:

Christ *had* laid hold on Paul, and he had set out running to reach Christ actually in glory. It is the calling above, not on high, that is, up in the heavenly glory; and he contrasts this with the path of death in minding earthly things. It is by having the heart set on the end, that the realisation of it is found on the way. Like a light at the far end of a dark passage, every step you take towards the light brings you both nearer to it, and also into more of its power, and the lighter it becomes.

It is often asked, if, "conformable unto his death," is present or future; the question is a mistake, for Paul was looking on to the end, and he was characterised by it. It is wonderful to see how the apostle realised this. He says, "I *have* suffered the loss of all things, and *do* [not *did*] count them," etc.

When at first we tasted the blessing of salvation and redemption in our hearts, what was the world to us? It was all nothing; just trees, and fields, and roads, that was all.

We are apt to get back gradually into natural associations; but it was not so with Paul. He was maintained in the effect that the first revelation of Christ had produced upon his soul. Really, when we are first converted, the world is like a parcel of gewgaws, not cared for by us at all. Men are but big children. A child likes its little carriage, to draw about with a doll in it and a lady likes a carriage drawn about with herself inside, dressed up like a doll. We know how present things do affect the mind, but it shews how quickly the mind gets off its object. We need power so that Christ may dwell in the inner man. And then there is the practical gaining of strength day by day. The fact that the world is judged, though believed in by us, yet often it is not practically judged in our lives; but, through grace, this gradually becomes true to us in detail.

When a certain breaking down of self takes place in a man's life, it produces a total change in him, but afterwards he has to learn it all in detail.

There is a complete change. He has accepted death really, by faith, and so he says, "the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"; but then he has to watch against

details and judge them; and if they start up again, then he must deal with them still more severely.

Of course, all this is after the eye of faith has been directed to the cross of Christ. It is a great mercy when, at starting, the Christian makes, by grace, a clean cut with the world. If my heart is not *full* of Christ, outward things will produce their impression. If I am not full of Him, 'Oh,' I shall think, 'what a beautiful picture!' That shews there is a vacant space left in my heart for such a thing to come in. The world is like Samson's hair, the roots of which, in a certain sense, still remain. Or else, it is like the twigs of willow in the ground, which will sooner or later begin to grow again. If we are firm, the world will become, of course, only more adverse; it will not tolerate, nor even bear with decided Christianity. A Christian, who gets into the world, is not happy anywhere, for there is nothing in the world that can satisfy him, and then, when he gets among his fellow-Christians, his conscience reproves him. He does not grow, nor does he get the enjoyment of the things that are in the word of God, and which are really his own.

A clean cut with the world is very often distinct from having the sentence of death written in ourselves.

Suppose anyone, before finding peace, goes through excessive exercises, so that the world becomes, so to speak, torn into shreds, directly such a one gets peace, the whole thing is settled. But now, when a full gospel is preached, and conviction brought in, a soul has oftentimes to go through the death of the flesh afterwards. Sometimes a person gets forgiveness and peace before he learns the killing power of the law. If he keeps close to Christ, he will find out what the flesh is; but in one way or the other he has to learn, just as much as if he had never been forgiven, that in himself, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing. In keeping close to God, he apprehends with God what he is. But if he does not do so, he will have to learn it with the devil. Saul was in such a state, that for three days he neither ate nor drank. I do not doubt it was with him deep exercise of soul; but there is, of course, no prescription as to time.

Romans 3 gives us forgiveness as to our sins; then afterwards, in chapter 7, we find out that in ourselves dwelleth no good thing. There I arrive, experimentally, at the root of self, and then it becomes a question not of forgiveness, but of deliverance. I do not believe we are really delivered from its power, until we have judged the flesh as a perfectly bad thing.

Nowadays, a great deal of current Christianity is characterised by knowing Christ after the flesh.

I remember when I was converted, all the Christians I met, were like people outside, and trusting they would be right when they got in, instead of being already inside.

But now that full forgiveness is preached, it often happens that people know forgiveness, and yet they have not learnt themselves.

Doubtless Paul had not fully attained, but one thing he *did*, and in that we see the energy of Christian life in him.

Ques. "As many as be perfect." Who are they?

Those who understand both redemption and this resurrection. I may be forgiven as a child of Adam, and I am so, but now I am a child of God. "Perfect," as he here calls it, is a Christian dead and risen; one who is not only quickened, but who knows that the blood of Christ is the only foundation for justifying him from his sins, and further, that as dead and risen with Christ, he has got out of the old place into the new one. I have seen Christ risen, and I am going to be like Him, and that is all I now know. That is what the apostle calls "perfect." It is the same in 1 Corinthians: "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect"; and so, too, in Ephesians 4: "Unto a perfect man." You cannot talk of the body coming up to the stature of the head, but, individually, it is true. At the last, undoubtedly, all Christians will come to that state.

Ques. He says, "that I may *know* him"?

Just so; so I can say I have everlasting life, and yet it says the end is everlasting life. It is the same with other truths.

In verse 10, it is much the same as we have in John, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall

appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.” He does not say of such an one, that he is as pure as Christ is pure, but that he purifies himself according to that standard. He looks on to the future, and then applies it to the present state.

It is a great thing to say that I desire to be made conformable to His death, and that in everything I am running in that spirit. But how can that be said except martyrdom is before me?

It is a great deal easier for me to give up the world than to be content when the world gives me up; when we find the world lets us go with, ‘Oh, he is turned saint, let him go’—that is a great deal harder to bear. Of course, if martyrdom confronted us, every Christian would rather be killed than give up Christ; but still, this is, little by little, the daily experience of the perfect Christian. It is astonishing to see where Paul really was. There is another passage in 2 Corinthians: “For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.”

If you are not with God for yourself, you will have self there for you. It may not be from want of sincerity or devotedness (it may, of course, issue in that), but if you are not with God a great deal, you have left your sweet retreat, and you are not safe. I speak not of salvation, but as to your present state of soul. There is an immense amount of temptation connected with our service, and there are, too, perilous times with it all.

Ques. With what do you connect the “forgetting those things which are behind”?

With this, “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.” If I were running in a race, I should not stop to see how I was getting on, or somebody else would soon out-distance me. There will be time enough to reckon up victories when I have reached the goal.

Sometimes persons are busy reckoning up their experiences; but to such I would say, ‘Go and get new ones.’ When the eye of faith is opened to see these

revelations of God, it makes us conscious how little we are. What a scene of glory and of moral perfectness we find as we look at Christ, or even at the apostle! "The life which I now live in the flesh," he says, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." There was a great consciousness of this with the apostle, and though in his letter to the Galatians there was very little expression of his heart, yet it comes out there also. Much as he loved these Galatians, he does not salute one of them, and he closes with simply this: "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks [i.e., brands] of the Lord Jesus." Nor does he even sign his name to the epistle.

Ques. What were the "beggarly elements" that he speaks of in chapter 4: 9?

They were Judaism, though the Galatians were not Jews; but that is what they were getting back to, i.e., to live in the flesh. And so, in early times, there was a constant effort to use and to improve the world. St. Augustine actually says that the drunkenness that marked their feasts might at least be sanctified by its being observed to saints, and not to devils. The "Lupercalia" were feasts at the time of the shortest day, in honour of the new energy of the sun, about to be put forth in the spring. Indeed they are observed to this day in the East Indies; all heathen observed them; so they put Christ's birth there and sanctified the time, and that is Christmas. It was done by Gregory, first in Africa, and then elsewhere. Augustine himself went to preach against getting tipsy in honour of the saints, and they nearly killed him. The forty days of Lent were not settled until the fifth century; Jerome gives the account of it. Paulinus could not get the Christians to be sober; and so he tried by means of pictures, fine arts, I and the like to set them free from their drunkenness; that is! what they call the primitive Church!

Ques. What about Good Friday?

That depends on the sun and moon, and they are very authentic. The full moon of the month Abib can be very well known, and then Pentecost is fixed seven weeks after. To find Christ's birth, you can only begin with Zacharias in the order of the priests in the course of Abia, and if you

can reckon that through, it would put Christ's birth at a totally different time of the year. Anniversaries are part of human nature.

We have one more point to notice here; Christ is coming to change our vile bodies; not "vile," morally, for it is not an abusive term, but one which means really, "body of *humiliation*."

Philippians 3:4-11; Mark 10:17-40

Lausanne, 5 September 1852

Le Messager Evangelique²⁰: Meditation #195 (1913)

These two passages offer a stark contrast between two states of mind. On the one hand, Paul shows us (Phil.3) one stamped by the power of the Holy Spirit soul, in which we find freedom, energy, peace, spiritual intelligence, confidence in the midst of difficulties. This soul has found *Christ*.

In opposition to it, we meet (Mark 10) amiable nature as it can be sometimes seen in men. The young man is talking about was true, he is pure in his conduct, respectful to his parents. He falls to his knees before Jesus entered by the appeal that emanates from him. Jesus looks at him and love him, instead of rejecting it. May be encountered, indeed, beautiful qualities in men who do not know God. The young man said, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life" He does not speak of being saved; this is a Jew, seeking some command far ignored him, who can make him gain eternal life; it's not a soul that feels its sin. Jesus is for her man, the great rabbi, who will tell him what to do, not the Son of God. Jesus also said, "Why do you call me good? You know the commandments. " The young man is convinced of having kept.

But the Lord put all that aside; it goes straight to the mobile of the whole life of this young man, what is at the

²⁰ Translated using Google

bottom of his heart, and it shows that he wants neither salvation nor the Saviour. Riches were placed between the Lord and him, and when he sees that he must leave, he leaves.

His heart is tested. Of all his good qualities, none was unearthing the motive which governed it. What constitutes man morally is the object that rules his heart. Wealth was the object of this young man; it was as far as the kingdom of God. It can be and look very nice, as the pattern that governs us is not reached; but the moment it is, everything is reversed and there is nothing left for God!

The case of Saul of Tarsus in Phil. 3, was very similar thereto. Saul could have confidence in the flesh; he was blameless as to the righteousness which is by law; It has all the advantages that a Jew could have; but when converted, it recognizes that all these things were harmful because they placed themselves between his soul and Christ. When the Holy Spirit had revealed to him the excellence of the knowledge of Christ, he considered everything else as rubbish, in order to win this new object that was presented to him. This is not home a energetic movement, access to fanaticism, but a calm and reasoned judgment. He knows the value of one who has his heart and affections, and when Christ was and grabbed his heart, everything else is considered a loss.

Is it bad to keep the commandments? Thus the flesh reasons. Saul and the young man had they not kept? Yet it prefers money to the Lord, to the glory in heaven, and he dropped to the low lust, all that God has to offer. With clean hands, his heart is completely degraded. As for Saul, he saw, in glory, on the road to Damascus, that he persecuted Jesus. God put his seal on the work of the cross by placing there his beloved Son. This is the righteousness of God, but that justice became, by faith, that of Paul. Under the work done for him, he was up to the sky; he was entitled to glory. It was the justice of God, not that of man. If at any point you observe legal justice, and you would have never even coveted, it would still only the justice of man; justice to which you would work, and not a particular faith justice. In Christ, I have the righteousness of God, a thousand times what I would have done if I had

kept the law, as well as an angel. Christ has he done that doing the law? The latter does demand that I give myself for the sins of others, I go to the death to accomplish this work? She did not even think about it. God's justice and his work have been manifested and glorified in the death of Jesus; and when we could not bring to God the justice of man, he brings us his own righteousness, done for sinful man.

Having seen up in glory, Christ who was obedient unto death, Paul says, Christ is revealed to me; he's the one I want. Observe the law does not give me the right to be where Christ is, under divine justice, which is not my righteousness. The righteousness of God placed Christ in glory, and this is what I need. I do not want to be found in Him having my own righteousness. God's righteousness that justifies a sinner can not be reconciled with the law of the man who will meet with a judge. These two things can not be mixed or added to each other. I want to be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ. I have God's justice, God's done with all that was between him and my soul; he countered me guise of justice. I want this; everything else is qu'empêchement, burdens that hinder me, garbage. If I thought it was a great sacrifice on my part to leave the things of the world, it would prove that I still believes the world because there is no great sacrifice to leave garbage. The leave is freedom. Knowledge of justice manifested in the glory of Jesus at the right hand of God, save the heart of every obstacle.

As soon as God searches your heart, even if you were blameless, you will find something that is not Christ; nay, that the chase, which prevents you from loving him and follow him, who owns your heart, sin, in a word, which shows that in fact you do not like Christ at all. The young man loved his fortune. Certainly it is not the only one.

What does it do? Simply acknowledge this truth. But since you do not have justice for God, He is one for you, and Christ came to you acquire it. It gives you the right to find you where God has placed himself. You can not mix these two things; you need one or the other. If this is the righteousness of God in Christ, everything else is garbage.

It is not justified with garbage. When we took this truth, the soul is at peace with God.

Peter said to the Lord: "Behold, we have left everything and have followed thee" (10:28). We did what you have to require that young man. Peter was converted, but was not freed by the Holy Spirit; and even the other disciples. They were on their way to follow the Lord, but "they were amazed and afraid in the next" (v.32). What for? Because there was the cross on the way, and Peter forgot that this was precisely what Jesus had told the young man, "Follow me, *take up the cross*" (verse 21.). Jesus went up to heaven, much higher than Jerusalem, but Jerusalem Cross was waiting, and he had to go through it to ascend to heaven. The disciples were not the only ones to follow this path; must we spent all. The cross horror soul who saw the glory, and think it's the only way to get the justice of God. But when we, like Paul, under the power of the Holy Spirit, we do not want to know Him and the power of his resurrection. The cross is gone; Death is no longer the king of terrors. We're done with death, with sin, with a life where man can not be blessed; we begin a new life, a life with Christ and with the Father. It's the thought of the apostle, in ch.Philippians 3: It is necessary, he said, that I have Christ. Jesus is on the cross; I have going on, being made conformable unto his death. Instead of being, like the disciples, frightened and amazed by the way, Paul wishes that by the power of the Holy Spirit. Having seen his glory, he wants to be with him where he is. The Holy Spirit makes him understand what is the way of the one he loves, he continues, he sees in glory, he, the man presented without spot to God, without penalty, in all the beauty and the perfection of a new life where sin does not, and he wants to know, being made conformable unto his death. The cross is morally him part of Jesus, and he wants to own, possess it all Jesus.

In this ch.10 Mark, when Jesus told his disciples that after three days rise again (v.34) and Jean Jacques (v.35-40) ask the Lord to give them the best part of her glory. This is not the kind of young man flesh, nor of men converts who stop at the cross; it is the flesh which, on the same path where we follow Jesus, show his selfishness and wants to

have the best place. The Lord said, "Can you drink the cup that I drink?" Yes, they reply.—Well! you drink, but space in the glory are prepared, and it is not mine to give.

How different is the thought of the apostle Paul! It does not and the best place, or the slightest. It is Christ that he wants to win. He sees him on the cross; he wants it to his cross; he sees it in glory, he wants to glory. If the crown of righteousness reserved for it, it's not her that his heart is attached. What makes it work harder than all the other apostles, is Christ to whom he will be; he saw in him such a perfect object, so unique, that it can not add anything, not even the best justice of man, not even the justice of an angel, because everything mixes spoil him. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that the apostle can achieve these things. The Holy Spirit frees us, not struggle, but the conditions that held us in slavery, and gives us the freedom in the hearts and consciousness. Through the knowledge of Christ, he communicates to us the energy, peace, joy, purity of affections free from selfishness.

Dear friends, do you have that peace, that joy, that freedom? The Holy Spirit you he found Christ so that you understand what it is that the justice of God, and that you have abandoned your own? Do you know that a thing? Do you say: It is Christ that I want to win? The purpose of your life is it Christ alone, or do you, like Jacques and Jean, the place you occupy in glory? A brilliant acquired status of a woman by her marriage, is it the same for her that the possession of her husband?

It is given you to understand that Christ is the only reason for your existence here. "For me," said the apostle, "to live is Christ!"

Philippians 3; Mark 10—The Power of Christ in
Resurrection and Glory

Present Testimony, vol.5 p.267 [1853]

Collected Writings, vol.16, p.322

Meditations from Le Messager Evangelique #287 (1929)

Meditations from Le Messager Evangelique #195 (1913)²¹

In Philippians 3 we have a striking illustration of the effect produced by the Holy Ghost in a soul which was indwelt by Him. As to the outward walk, what a brilliancy does He give! What stability before God! What true liberty! For the Holy Spirit reveals Christ to the soul; and the soul perceives Him so clearly, that all that is not Christ is rejected as being opposed to Him.

It is important to remark the contrast which exists between such a one and the man who is not full of the Holy Ghost, though he may be, or may seem to be, powerfully drawn toward Christ Jesus, or may even be as truly a convert as were the disciples. We shall see this contrast connected in succession with righteousness, the cross, and the glory, if we compare Philippians 3:4-11 and Mark 10:17-40.

In the history given us in Mark 10:17-27 we see a man whose position is in contrast with that of the apostle (in Phil. 3), which shews in a striking manner the effect produced by the Holy Spirit. The apostle had left all for Christ. Advantages, in which a Jew could boast, he had had beyond what the young man referred to in Mark 10 possessed. He had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, the most celebrated Rabbi; he was a citizen of Tarsus, a city renowned (if we adopt modern phraseology) as a university; he had been well trained in all the acquirements of the day. Moreover, he was privileged in having led a blameless life, as he tells us in verse 6. All this was very precious to him as a man, so long as he had not seen Christ. All that a man can pride himself in, Paul possessed. If any thought that the flesh might be gloried in, Paul could shew that he had more therein than they.

²¹ The 1913 French notes of this address are the most brief, but the earliest— Lausanne, 5 September 1852. Those of 1929 exactly match the English here.

But Christ in glory revealed Himself to Paul, and then he could say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss, etc., that I might win Christ." What was the state of Paul's soul? I must gain Christ. This is all I have to do, my whole, sole business; everything else found in my pathway is but loss. Such is the effect produced by the Spirit of God in the soul which possesses Him. The apostle is troubled by nothing that he meets on his way: he sees as clear as noonday that all that is not Christ is loss. He sees Christ in the midst of every set of circumstances. Are they circumstances of suffering? So much the better; there will be the more of Christ. Christ is there: he sees *Him* by the help of God.

In comparing this with Mark 10 the contrast is seen, namely of a man who has not the Spirit: for this chapter presents us with one in circumstances similar to Paul, but not full of the Holy Ghost. He is portrayed, however, as a man of a character altogether lovely; but Christ was not his object, and natural loveliness availed naught. Yet his character was such that it attracted the attention of the Lord. Jesus "loved him," v.21. **He also was as to the law blameless.** A Jew, he supposed that he was to have eternal life by the law. His thought as to Jesus was, That is the man that can tell me what I must do in order to inherit eternal life. The pure, excellent, and perfect character of the Lord had convinced him that the knowledge of the most excellent commandment might be learned from Him; and He hastens to Him. He was *ardent* in his desire to know what he had to do, and he drew near to Jesus with all possible respect, with "Good Master" (Jesus received not this praise from one who regarded Him only as a man), he even kneels before the Lord. There was something very lovely in the character of him who could say (and the Lord admits it as a truth) "All these things have I kept from my youth up." But the Lord puts his heart to the proof, in order to make manifest what are the motives which sway it, and He does so by means of the cross: "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, etc., and come take up the cross and follow me."

However lovely and estimable the young man may have been, he does not take up the cross. When the state of his

heart is in question, he has no will for what is Christ's. He **looked for righteousness in the law**; and Christ, present with him, succeeds not in engaging him in another course. He said not, as Paul, "I have suffered the loss of all things, and do esteem them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him—not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Such was the effect produced by the Holy Ghost in Paul by the revelation to him of a Christ in glory. Paul saw Christ and said, That is my righteousness, I make no count of my own. He desires not to have a human but a divine righteousness. We cannot have both; for if God gives me His righteousness, I do not present to Him that which is of myself.

Now, suppose that I had kept all the law and am without fault; such a righteousness would not be of God, but that of a man. The law of God requires that man shall love God and his neighbour; and this is what man does not do; but even supposing that I had kept His law in its fullest extent, I should only have a human righteousness, whereas I have a far better righteousness in Christ, even that of God Himself. Does the law demand that I should give my life in order to glorify God, and that, too, in behalf of worthless sinners? Of a truth I should not know how to obey such a commandment; but Christ has done so; He could say, "I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"; and He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The manner, too, in which Christ gave Himself up on the cross altogether exceeds all that we could have done, even if we suppose that we had the power to fulfil the law. Christ has glorified God as man, and is now glorified with God. It was thus that Paul saw Him, and he virtually said, That is the righteousness which suits me well.

In how amazing a manner has God been manifested in Christ Jesus! By faith I see Him on the cross, and I say to myself, I cannot do without that glorious work; for from the moment that righteousness is of Christ it is no longer of me. Paul, when he saw Christ, had this thought, Behold in heaven the One who has communicated to me a divine

righteousness; and his expression necessarily is "that I may ... be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God." So long as we seek a human righteousness, it is evident we do not know the righteousness which is of God. Paul, having seen the glory of God, stops not before he has said, I shall be there where Christ has the right to be. He is entered into heaven with a divine righteousness. There is my place too: all else is but dung and dross. Yes, all else is for me loss.

If Christ is thus before our eyes, all that is not Christ is an embarrassment. We must win Christ. Faith, having once apprehended the righteousness of God, can no longer put up with the righteousness of man; to faith there is a need to be to walk in a more excellent way. The riches which the young man valued had no longer any attraction for the heart of Paul; he had seen Christ and God's righteousness in glory, the end and prize of the heavenly calling.

In Mark 10:25 Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Great was the astonishment of all; and they said, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus concealed not the truth. It was impossible with man, but all things were possible with God! As to man, however excellent may be his pretensions, it is impossible: he loves money; he is ambitious. To cut the matter short, if man's ability to save himself is in question, Jesus Christ declares it is impossible. But let us suppose that we have left all, as Peter said, "Lo! we have left all and followed thee"; and in truth they had, by the grace of God, really followed Jesus. The hearts of the disciples were really attached to Jesus; affection was really awakened in them towards Him. They had done that, grace helping, which the young man could not make up his mind to do; even as the Lord said, "Verily I say unto you, There is no one that has left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, etc., for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time ... with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life." You have been obliged to break, for My sake, ties here below: well, you shall find

the same, stronger and more perfect, among the children of God; and, at the end, eternal life. There are souls who have apprehended these things, and who have set out, and that sincerely, as pilgrims with Jesus; but on that road we have to follow Jesus, and Jesus has passed by way of the cross: we shall meet then that which will fully put us to the proof.

“And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them: and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them what things should happen unto him.” We may say to ourselves, perhaps, what a blessed thing to have Jesus immediately before us! But the disciples were amazed; we desire to be in the way with Christ and to follow Him, but we are ignorant of what the cost may be; the disciples walked in it, and they found what the difficulty was: if Jesus went to Jerusalem, it was to be put to death there. The Jews would crucify Him, yet go thither He would. His disciples were filled with fear as they followed, because they had not the Holy Ghost; still they forsook not as yet their Master, yet they were amazed and in trouble.

Jesus is the good Shepherd; He leads forth His sheep, He walks before them and the sheep follow Him. The disciples were afraid as they followed Jesus, Jesus led them to the cross. The cross is on the road which leads to glory. Well! that was just what Paul desired. The disciples were amazed and afraid; Paul's state (Phil.3) was far different, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death.” Instead of being frightened, Paul thought, I shall be partaker of the sufferings of Christ. I shall then have much more of Him; I shall die to sin, to the world; I shall be much more conformed to the likeness of Christ, and all that destroys the flesh destroys that which hides Christ. It was no imaginary danger; Paul's trial was at hand—the alternatives of the question were life or death. Death was before him, but he saw that it was the means of having more of Christ; so that he said, I willingly take all that, for it is Christ. He had no desire to have sufferings, but to

have the fellowship of *His* sufferings, to be made conformable unto His death.

For us the cross is light in comparison with that which Paul had to suffer. Nevertheless, it is the cross which takes from us all that which hinders our realising Christ in glory. What a contrast between the disciples, amazed and afraid, when going up to Jerusalem to the cross was in question, and the apostle Paul, who gloried in everything that could communicate to him anything more of Christ! He knew that, in passing through death, he should die to death. When Christ died, He died not as to communion with the glory of the Father. On the contrary He therein only realised that He had done with the guilt which, for our sakes, pressed heavily upon Him, done with the world which was a desert land—a land of drought where no water was. Death was to Him to depart and enjoy in His Father's presence, eternal blessedness; for us death is not aught else.

Therefore, as Christ said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit," so Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." If death gives us more conformity to Christ, we need not stop to consider what suffering the flesh may find therein; we find our profit in it, because it is death to all that is not Christ, and we glory in it because it makes us more like to Christ. Is the cross before me? Good! I shall have more of Christ; the energy of the Spirit makes me say, "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection." I see Christ in glory; well, I desire to be as He is and to be with Him. I desire to possess Him just as I see Him; and if to gain that, or a fuller measure of it, I must pass through death; to me to die is gain. Where there is the energy of the Spirit, there is light, and a single eye which makes us judge that Christ is worth all, and that all else is worth nothing: and this purifies the saint's heart.

In Mark 10:35 we have James and John asking of Jesus to place them one on the right and the other on the left. They desired a good place in the kingdom. James and John had faith; spite of the dangers which they saw on the road to Jerusalem, they believed that Jesus would have the glory and the kingdom, and they said, At all events give us a good place. But about whom were they thinking? About

James and John. Then Jesus speaks to them of drinking of the cup and again sets the cross before them, subjecting them to the will of the Father, even as He Himself was obedient thereunto.

Here we have a step in advance. The question is of glory but the Holy Spirit has no fellowship with this self. The heart is not delivered from it until the Spirit has guided our thoughts to Jesus. So was it with Paul, in whom we find altogether another thing than 'myself'—(I will labour hard to have a good place). **Paul is occupied with Christ more than with Paul**—“That I may win Christ.” It was the Spirit who thus set Christ before him. The power of the Spirit had so directed his thoughts to Jesus, that Paul is, as it were, lost in Jesus. The effectual presence of the Spirit crucifies egotism and gives us freedom of thought about ourselves while on the way; it occupies us with but one object—Jesus: to be conformed to the pattern and to look to Him is all that we have to do, and this purifies the heart.

Paul laboured more than they all; and therefore, in a certain sense according to man's thoughts, he has a title to the most excellent place; yet he did all, just because he did not seek such a place, but he sought Christ alone. If he win Christ, what a righteousness! If there be sufferings by the way, well, it is but conformity to Christ; if death, it is gain; for we look for the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our vile bodies, and render them like unto His own glorious body.

Paul thinks not of himself; the Spirit fills him with Christ Himself, and all that conceals from him Christ and His worth is rejected. The Spirit gives clearness of view and repose to the heart through the knowledge of the righteousness of God. Then we desire to have Christ, to possess Him, and we find what is the way thereunto. To Jerusalem and the cross! No matter; it is the cross of Christ, and Christ on the cross and Christ with the cross, but it is naught less than the divine righteousness which we have in Him.

In Mark we have the young man who would not abandon his riches and take up the cross, in order to have heaven; then the disciples following Jesus in fear, yet following. In

Philippians 3 we see Paul following the Lord without fear and with joy, whatsoever sufferings might be his, because he loved Christ, as Christ, for His own sake. The important matter is for each of us to have Christ in Himself, which gives a pure heart and a single eye; and to have Christ so entirely our all that all our business may be to possess Him, and in view of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, to count all things but dung and dross. Again, approved by Him and filled with Himself, we shall be in peace according to the righteousness which God Himself has given to us.

Philippians 3—That I May Win Christ

Notes of an Address

Things Concerning Himself, vol.2, p.14 [1892]

This epistle is not one of doctrine. We get, of course, in this chapter, the foundation laid (v.9), but, as often remarked, it is an epistle that gives us the proper experience of the Christian, that is, the power of the Spirit of God working in him in his path; and, consequently, we get the spirit and character in which a Christian should walk down here. In Phil.2 we see the graciousness of the spirit in which Christ walked. He always went down and humbled Himself, even down to the cross, and then God exalted Him as man to His right hand: even as Antichrist exalts himself, and is abased. Christ is the bright and perfect example of "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." In ch.3 you get the energy of the Spirit.

Now, we cannot have too distinctly and clearly before our souls the great basis of the completeness of redemption. In the first place, the putting away of sins, and sin too—the putting away of all that the first Adam produces, and then our introduction into a totally new place—an entirely new standing—we have peace with God. Jesus was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is not all. Our place is in Christ, and there is no possibility of condemnation for a person in Christ. We see the efficacy of the work of Christ, we get the certainty of sins put away, are sealed by the Holy Ghost; consequently we are only waiting for Christ to come to take us to glory. That is our place, and all our duties flow from the place we are in, even as in natural things. We are brought into Christ—made children of God, sons of God; then our duties flow from that place.

Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children. Again, He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

Therefore, the first great thing is to know our place: not only that we are forgiven (though that is the first thing we need), not only that we were guilty, but the believer finds out a great deal more than that, he finds out that he is lost. Guilty brings in the thought of judgment; but if we are lost we do not think of judgment, because we are ruined already. I speak not only of what I have done, but where I am outside Paradise, and totally ruined already. We are lost in our own condition.

I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.

So that I do not say merely that I am justified, but that I am saved, and in Christ. I do not believe we get in to full liberty till we understand we are totally lost and saved—not only what we have done, but what we are.

It is important that the Christian should distinctly get hold of that, for it is what redemption means. As with Israel in Egypt—the blood upon the door-posts saved them from the judgment of God; but besides that, God took them out of Egypt, and put them into Canaan.

We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

It is a new condition and place altogether, and this is deliverance—not only forgiveness and justification, but deliverance; and, therefore, in Rom.7 it is not “How shall I get forgiveness?” but “Who shall deliver me?” The answer is, “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” He finds his sins blotted out; defiled, he is washed; having

offended, he is forgiven; guilty, he is justified. God has made that perfectly clear for ever. But the old man is dead before God, and the new man is in Christ. Christ is my righteousness. I was lost, without hope in myself, but now I am in Christ before God. That is deliverance. In Rom.5 you are justified; but in Rom.8, There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

To find out, practically, that I am lost, is a very different thing from finding that I am guilty; because, if lost, I have finished my whole history, and I must get my whole condition made new (thank God it is, in Christ). If I am guilty, I may hope to get forgiveness; but if I am lost, I must get a new condition altogether—a totally new creation in Christ Jesus. When I have this redemption, the effect is to leave me, as a matter of fact, down here, being thus delivered, and then I begin to run the race; for you and I have in this world to go through the wilderness (to find ourselves in heavenly places too). God has minded that we should be thus exercised to discern good and evil, and what we get in this chapter is power in that course. We have to run with patience the race that is set before us, looking off unto Jesus.

It is the expression, in Phil.3, of the experience of one who was running the race faithfully.

Sin is never mentioned in the epistle; what you find in Paul was, that the power of the Holy Ghost was there. It was not that the flesh was not there, for he had a thorn in the flesh, but there was power to keep it down. You get complete deliverance here, entire freedom, for he was running his race free; and another thing you see is power, Christ's power. He was perfectly free, or he could not have run on in that power, and also (which is practically a great thing), he had an object, which gave him singleness of eye and purpose. You get the man set perfectly free:

The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The principle of sin, in which I was lost, is dead and gone for faith, because Christ has died, and, therefore, I can say I died:

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The life that I have is in Christ, and as to the flesh, I say, "I died upon the cross." That is the place the apostle was then in, and there was power, because "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." There is Christ's power. His grace is sufficient for us; therefore we can never excuse ourselves if we commit sin because Christ's grace is sufficient for us—His strength is made perfect in weakness. It is not that the flesh is not there; but a dead person does not act. We fail; but the Christian condition is, "Ye are dead." If there is carelessness and want of prayer, failure does come; but there is no excuse for it. If Christ is in me, there is life and power, and the flesh is a dead thing. It is not only that Christ has died for your sins, but you have died with Christ; that is where real freedom comes in, and power comes in too, because Christ is there.

You will always find, that where Christ's power is in us, Christ is the object of our life, as in Gal.2, I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and then he adds, And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

There is the object: wherever Christ is the power of life in us, Christ is the object of that life. Christ having become a man, and gone into glory, God has given the object of His delight to be the object of our delight also, and given us His Spirit to enable us to make it so. It is a wonderful thing to see that God has so set Christ before us, and given us His Spirit, and a new nature, to be able to enjoy Him, linking us thus with Himself.

The next thing is, "I want to win Christ." That is what he means by

That I may apprehend (or lay hold of) that for which also I am apprehended (laid hold of) by Christ.

Christ had laid hold of him, that was all settled; he had learnt Christ, and now he says, "I want to possess Him." He is not looking at the salvation wrought out by Christ, but at the end; and therefore he says, at the close of the

chapter, For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.

It is the salvation we are expecting that he speaks of now. We have the man freed, and with power; and we have the man with Christ as his object and nothing else: and there is where we all are, and it is just a question of our faith as to how far it is true of us practically. It all depends on how far Christ is our object. You have the graciousness of deportment in ch.2. Here we get the active energy of the Spirit of God; and mark, it is where there is one single object that there is practical energy and power.

A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. In some things, he acts like a Christian; in others, he does not. If he has two or three objects, he is unstable, but if he has one object, he walks with energy.

Now what characterized the apostle was that he had given up all things; not “did count them but dung,” but “do” now! Can we say that? At the moment of our conversion we all felt that all we had in the world had been deceiving us, and leading us to hell and its horrors. The pleasure, wealth, riches, ease, everything that was gain to us as men in this world, can we say of them, I do count them but dung that I may win Christ?

Paul was not satisfied with having counted, but he says, “I do count,” and further than this, “All this will only hinder me.” Like a man running a race, he has on a beautiful cloak, we will suppose; he finds it hinders him, and he throws it off.

It is the object we have that always characterizes us—blessed be God, we have it in Christ unto everlasting life. It was not any uncertainty with the apostle, it was not that he doubted that Christ had laid hold of him, but he wanted to get Christ. There was this honest purpose of heart—the man was free, he had Christ’s strength; and then there was this purpose of heart—spiritual energy and activity. There are two things which go together. The first, “That I may win Christ,” and then our resurrection from the dead, that is, our own glory, which comes in as the second thing.

First, "That I may win Christ," it was Christ Himself who possessed his heart; still he says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Well, I can have but one thing as my object. If I am making tents, as Paul did, I shall do it well; it is our duty as Christians to be patient and gracious in meeting with hard men—wrong doers. You will find that every thing is judged of entirely by the object a man has. If he wants to get a thing, he will spend his money without stint to get it—he estimates everything by his object. An avaricious man will say of a spendthrift, "Did you ever see such a fool!" And the spendthrift will say of the one fond of money, "He might as well have a stone, for his money is no good to him." The moment I get Christ as my object everything else will be as dross and dung, and there will be no want of lowliness, because the nearer we get to Christ the less we think of ourselves. I want to know Him, and the Spirit of God is not grieved. The path of the just grows brighter and brighter until the perfect day. His heart is more capable of knowing Christ, and he knows Him better—he is not thinking of self. It is the privilege held out to us that we shall be so perfect that we shall only think of the Lord, and in any measure as we are near Him now, we think of Him and not of ourselves. The Christian looks at himself not only as forgiven, as justified, but as perfect, and going to be like Christ and with Christ. He has a new place; he is in Christ; he has it by the Spirit in faith now, and he wants actually to possess it.

Now how far can our souls say we are actually delivered, not only forgiven, but delivered? I do not mean that if you are careless you will not slip into sin, but there is a positive deliverance; we are not in the flesh at all. The world is there, Satan is there, and I have to watch every moment to have Christ sufficiently before my mind. You will find that nine-tenths of the things that are temptations to us would be no temptations at all if we walked with Christ. See a mother who has heard that her child has met with an accident on the railway, and lies at the station suffering; how she hastens to the spot, and does not even think of the show and vanity in the shop windows she may have to pass. Another time she might linger there, but not

now. If our souls are filled with Christ, as I said, nine-tenths of the things that are temptations to us we shall not think of at all. It is living as Christ—By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.

The great mass of the temptations we should escape altogether, because we should be thinking of something entirely different. God has called me up to be with Christ and like Christ, and now I am after that, and am looking for nothing else. We all have some object that we follow with energy and life, and can we say that it is Christ, and that that is the one thing that governs our hearts from day to day?

The Lord give us, beloved, to know what that true liberty is; where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty—liberty with God and from the things around: though we still have to contend, and shall have, too, yet it is with the joy of Christ in our hearts as we go on. God has called us in sovereign grace to be with Him self, like and with Christ for ever, and where the soul is full of the Holy Ghost, there is joy and sustained freshness.

Philippians 3

Le Messenger Evangelique²²: Meditation #103 (1897)

The apostle could find easy to rejoice in the Lord, but he was in prison and helpless. These are the afflictions that give us the extent of our relationship with our heavenly inheritance. Paul returns to his mind all the advantages he had as the world benefits of birth, race, religion, everything upon which a Jew could be based. The apostle had abandoned all that, and after all, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord." He knows where he is himself; may retake all these things according to their value, and say, "After all, it is only manure." Even deprived of everything that can rejoice inwardly his heart, he advises them to rejoice and consider everything a loss compared to the love of God in Jesus. Two things are possible: worldly benefits and a

²² Translated using Google

pleasant religion to flesh things by which Satan has corrupted the Church, while for us it is to serve God in spirit to glory in Christ Jesus, and not to be Hebrew, Pharisee, etc. Anything that catches our hearts apart from Christ, necessarily weaken our faith, because even a religious thing, if it is not Christ's flesh.

Note that phrase: "That I may win Christ." It consists of two things. 1 Paul wants to be found in him, not having the righteousness which is of the law, but a righteousness which is of God by faith. Faith is committed to a justice that is God alone, and the time that comes out, the gospel is shaken. 2 He wants to know Jesus Christ himself and the power of his resurrection. There is a virtue in his resurrection, a power. If one of us were raised, but in this world, would there be links with the world of desires that are to him? No, but it take long to be in the glory, because nothing would stop him in the development of diseases of the new man. It would start in the sky by its desires and thoughts. Such is the power of his resurrection. When the soul has achieved through the power of the resurrection of Jesus, she is resurrected and that any connection between it and the world is broken, she is out. Christ before us for that. We are in mortal bodies and in a world which, if we are not vigilant, we will work soon.

The power of his resurrection will effectively make us forget things which are behind and we do tend to stress with those before; it makes us understand, through the Holy Spirit, the purpose for which we were seized.

All that is in the world, prevents us from making spiritual progress. We have to consider that there is a positive virtue in the resurrection of Jesus. We are not to the flesh when she claims her rights, but we have the right to oppose the death of Christ to the accusations of Satan, and resurrection of Christ to the attraction of all things of the earth. Resurrection life of Christ is in us, not just its effects. Things to which this life leads us, is our high calling. This gives strength to this life is that our affections are powerfully attracted to an object. Such is the power of his resurrection. Those who returned back (v.18) does not possess that power.

We walk in this world as resurrected and waiting for the time to come in glory? We were seized by Christ for that, and it makes us forget the world. Our privilege is to forget what is behind, even our progress in the Christian life, and look forward. If I desire that Christ, I am sure to win; I do not have to look for something else to support me. There may be trials, tribulations, but God uses to make us feel much better that we have everything in him. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were “established on the services of the province of Babylon,” that is to say, advanced in the world, and they have found no links. They were part of the crowd that would love the image, but their external circumstances were so in order that the king of the world could not forgive them for having too much conscience to worship his statue. The world thrown into the furnace. They found the Son of God and have been issued of which the world had bound. Do not fear the furnace; do not fear the trials and painful things; instead, let us rejoice. They make us find the Lord Jesus.

Philippians 3:1-21

Le Messager Evangelique²³: Meditation #159 (1907)

These are not the works of the flesh that are presented here, but it's *the confidence in the flesh*. Nobody would trust the sin to please God, nor would present sin to be approved of Him him; but we continually encounter in men, trust in the flesh to approach Him, though the flesh is corrupt and can only produce bad fruit. It's awful that the soul is blinded at this point, but the word of God is there to put these things naked and shed light on the state of our heart. I talk to people who are here, those who trust in the flesh to please God. It is a sad thing for them, after the flesh in all their lives, have to learn that those who are in the flesh can not please God.

The flesh is using the same religion as an instrument. Paul speaks here of the Jewish religion, but it can also take

²³ Translated using Google

many things to Christianity to appear before God in the flesh; needless to say we do not borrow what convinces us of sin, but what can exalt ourselves before Him. As for their religious status, blinded souls find grounds for confidence before God in religious practices whose flesh seized. It puts on the outside as a mainly to hide her nakedness.

Thus the flesh trust something that hides God, and this is what the apostle gives us in these verses. We have an established religion of God, remaining a long time, a true religion; and, secondly, irreproachable conduct in this religion. The confidence of the flesh so here rests on two things: a true religion, and irreproachable conduct. Is not the confidence of the majority of those around us?

It should probably have these two things, but the mundane pretends to have them, while the Christian has. That is why it is so difficult to convince and to enlighten those who are in this state. Paul was circumcised according to the ordinance of God; it was a pure Hebrew blood Benjamite, who can name his tribe in a time of confusion, the better Jew than others (Gal. 1:14) Pharisee zealous. It was the religion of his fathers; he knew very well, and it was flawless—however, it was *lost*.

It was all part of his carnal confidence, and his conscience was never reached. He had borrowed from Judaism which could give him a better opinion of himself, and remain, in fact, alien to God in this world. This exalted Saul, and not glorified God. Is it not the case for many who have been baptized and professing Christians? Saul believed the truth revealed once his people, as now it is believed that justification is by faith, not by works. But if this becomes a way to be happy with ourselves—true doctrine or good conduct—it's just a piece of more added to the habit of self-righteousness which hides God. How it is unfortunate that true Christians see around them, their friends and acquaintances, thousands of like-minded people, without being sensitive to this state!

No he is not here souls who are quiet because they have the truth as their fathers believed and they lead irreproachable conduct? It is a solemn thing to be quiet

when you are far from God and lost. Natural conscience holds the outdoor light of Christianity. In the midst of a civilized and polite society, the human heart wants to have a good reputation. *Satan is moral*, and it departs from both God the gross sins. A Hindu, a Mohammedan, a Jew, borrow from their religion which can give them a good reputation; Christian borrowed from Christianity which gives him, and what can confirm him in his good opinion of himself. That is what he called being a Christian.

Paul saw that this was harmful to him, was a loss, and when he found himself in the light of God, he had completely lost the good opinion he had of him before. His blameless life was not only pride, a veil of hypocrisy thrown over sin. If the Holy Spirit acted in his heart, he would have seen the sin in him, and would have said, instead of believing flawless "O wretched man that I am!".

The law actually entering the heart, gives the knowledge of sin; but an awakened conscience is a host sad because she is always talking about us, introduces us to ourselves, and makes us see what we are. It makes him unhappy man, because it is God who holds the mirror in which he sees, and he can not be convicted of sin, nor stand in the presence of God, nor prevent the presence. The man with an awakened conscience, knows the truth is even more scared. If Jesus was despised and persecuted by men, what a relief it can give us when we understand that we despised or contradicts all our lives? The man who has a good opinion of himself is his life going to despise Jesus and to oppose Him.

When light is encountered, we see clearly that it is against a holy God and goodness that sinned, and it hates himself, and it was shot down and humiliated. So everything happens between God and the soul; the latter, convicted of sin, is already under judgment and judged, and takes the side of God against itself. This is a converted soul. Any self-righteousness is he abhorred; she sees that she can not win justice for his efforts; she needs God's justice, not this justice of the man she had believed to have when she was simply herself.

The justice of man is self-righteousness. The real Pharisee does not give himself all the glory, but he said, I give you thanks, O God, that I am;—While the Christian gives thanks for what God is. A sincere soul who seeks to satisfy the justice of God will always lead to despair.

It takes consciousness, in the sense of what it is before God, the only justice that satisfied the justice of God himself, so that everything is by grace. If God gives grace and I believe I have nothing to add, and God wanted salvation, that justice, even by faith, for it was only by grace.

To say that the Son of God has been hit by the wrath of God is saying much about the holiness and justice of God that if a man had been struck by the anger, and the soul is fully satisfied that This saves fully meets all that God may require.

Jesus came out of the dead by the power of God in resurrection; where the goal is we tend to be with Him in resurrection. Christ has done it all to Him alone; God's justice was glorified; it is, in his person, sitting at the right hand of God and the soul, grabbing Jesus by faith, is perfectly happy, because she finds in him a new man, a resurrected man. His goal now is to be like Jesus resurrected. This is the largest mobile sanctification. We shall be like Him, for we shall see him as he is, and he that hath this hope in him purifies himself as he is pure.

The religion of one who has been convicted of sin is certainly much happier than he who is satisfied with himself. For the first, Jesus did it all, and God has accepted in him at his own right risen Jesus.

May God grant us the grace to feel the deep love of Christ who, despite everything he saw in us, loved us, and has done for us the righteousness of God.

Philippians 3—The Aim of the Apostle Paul

Le Messenger Evangelique²⁴: Meditation #247 (1935)

This letter does not address doctrine; also the word sin is not there. The subject is Christian experience, and our chapter also speaks of the righteousness of God in Christ, in contrast to that of the law.

Paul is shown to us as running towards a goal he seeks to achieve; and has not yet succeeded: it is in this sense that he has not reached perfection (v.12). Yet he says in verse 15, “as many of us who are so perfect...”—here, a perfect man is a man who has reached full growth, in contrast to a child who has yet to develop. This is a man who has understood God’s purpose for him. In 1 Corinthians 2:6-10 we read: “But we speak wisdom among the perfect, but wisdom not of this world...”. God did not only know the riches of his grace but also the riches of his glory. Not only Christ washed away our sins, but God gives us all things with him and in him. If a friend has only just pay my debts, I have no obligation, but I’m still broke. On the contrary, as a Christian, I am not only acquitted before God for all my sins, but I have an immense fortune is assured me that I have fame, inheritance, adoption.

There are two kinds of service in respect of souls: the first, most valuable, perhaps, is to present the salvation of sinners; the second, also very precious, is to build up the soul already converted. When I found salvation, I can talk to others. The man in the flesh, the natural man lives for the land, does not think about God. It is never to God that turn the thoughts of a man, even if not busy with his business. They live decently or not he lives without God. Man has always failed in all situations where it was placed: in Eden, Adam disobeyed and is driven out of paradise; Noah, on a new and purified by the deluge earth gets drunk; the law is given to the Israelites, and they make the golden calf; priesthood is established, and the son of Aaron brought the strange fire, so that Aaron never entered into the holy places with his clothes of glory and

²⁴ Translated using Google

beauty; King Solomon loved the kingdom was divided and foreign women. God said: I have my son, men will reverence my son. Jesus came into this world and he is crucified. God allowed this in the heart of man is manifested, and by the cross of Christ, it puts an end once and for all the responsibility of man. When the trial of man was complete, "in the end of time, Christ was manifested" (Hebrews 9:26). It is the "last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), the man of God's counsels. At the foundation of the world, Christ is "rejoiced in the habitable part of the earth, and his delights were with the son of man" (Prov 8. 27-31). This is thought to be found in Luke 2:14, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; ! good will toward men "Jesus became man; and as a man, he perfectly glorified God. Therefore God has placed in glory, having seated to his right. A man is in glory, and that is Christ. Our place is again in glory with him. Between God and Christ alone was settled the question of sin and God's justice. Christ "was shown for the abolition of sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). "He has perfected forever (that is to say without interruption, continuously) those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). In addition, we are made children of God, and we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!(Rom. 8:15, 16). Relationships are established, diseases develop in relationship with them. It's more responsibility for life, but in a well secured position, which however does not exclude, of course, the responsibility for the believer to walk in a manner worthy of the One who has redeemed. Those who believe are not in the flesh; it is in Christ, not in Adam. Too often the souls cling to that found salvation in Christ and are not included in these truths. Sometimes we think that there is humility to remain in uncertainty; but do not just accept what God gives is pride.

What God intends he who received salvation by faith under Christ's work? To be "conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). The Redeemer will not be without its redeemed. It gave us for the glory and fame he gained for us. When we see him we shall be like him. "As is the

heavenly, such also are the heavenly” (1 Cor.15:48). This is the perfection that Paul continued. He wanted to win Christ and because of that, he felt everything like garbage. He did not want justice under the law, which would have been his righteousness to him; but he had the righteousness which is in Christ, just as one would trade with happiness rags against precious clothes. There is no other Christian perfection for that conform to Christ. And, running towards this goal, there is progress for the soul in this way, as the apostle says elsewhere: “with unveiled face beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as the Lord the Spirit “(2 Cor. 3:18). If I make this progress, my eye will become increasingly clear: something is presented to me to be inconsistent with the glory of the Lord? well! I give up; and I will do so in respect of all I gradually discerned as unworthy of Christ. We are in Christ and Christ is in us (John 14:20). So we have to reflect Christ, to manifest his life in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4:11). The Lord is always with us; we need his help at every moment, but we will not be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). It is true that the Christ before him as someone who sees a light at the end of a long driveway: it always becomes more distinct and clear as it approaches until he can the grasp. Paul was about to appear before Nero; he expected the suffering, but he knew they would result than doing more like Christ by making it conform to his death. Christ in glory was the goal toward which he was running, which he wanted to achieve at any cost. I ask you, dear friends: Do you have the same goal as the Apostle Paul?

Philippians 3—4

Girdle of Truth, vol.7 p.161 [1863]

Collected Writings, vol.17, p.367

I follow up a previous paper by sending you some remarks on Philippians 3, to which I will now add some on chapter 4, which has occupied my mind a little since.

Salvation in this epistle is looked at as before the Christian not as an uncertainty, but as a thing not yet attained. It is the actual possession of glory, the new estate of man in actual glory, in Christ ascended on high, which alone is in view. Christ has laid hold of the believer for it, but he is looking to lay hold on it. Christ, seen in that glory (and the apostle had so seen Him, in fact) is everything. Being thus found in Him is what Paul looks for, for righteousness, as all else, in that day. When he gets actually before God, laying aside everything Jewish that might exalt him, everything human, his only thought is to be found in Christ. This puts the new estate of man in a very striking position. The whole Christian estate is looked at as future, because in resurrection, its being actually attained being the whole matter in hand. Hence justification, righteousness itself, is seen as actual acceptance in Christ, when we arrive before God. We come before God in Christ. The apostle unequivocally looks for a resurrection—state and glory. Till he has that, he has never attained, is not yet perfect.

The present state of man, even supposing he has been quickened of God, is his state as born of the first Adam; not simply because of sin, for the apostle supposes here the Christian to be walking above it, always walking in the Spirit, making progress towards glory, but in no way occupied with sin. But he sees the Christian needing to be brought into this new state identified with Christ in glory.

If he had the whole righteousness which the flesh or the first Adam was capable of, and of which the law was the rule, this was only the first man, not the Second: he would not have it. It was not Christ, God's righteousness by faith.

He had seen Christ, the second Man, the last Adam, accepted in glory. He has been laid hold of to be

conformed to this, this wholly new state and condition of man according to God's righteousness. It had displaced all else in his mind. He could not be content with anything else or less. The two were incompatible; and he could not have the old man's place, even if it were righteous, and the new man's too. He counts all these things which honoured and accredited the first man, the self, Paul, as loss and dung. The risen glorified Man is before us. It is not however here considered as that which has justified us; that inasmuch as we have died with Christ, who made atonement for us, and that we are risen with Him according to the value of that work in virtue of which as of His person He is risen, we are justified, and our acceptance witnessed before God. **It is not with this view of judicial acceptance the resurrection is viewed here;** but as **a new state**, into which in its full result, we are to enter, including of course divine righteousness, but the whole new state of glory. This puts the new estate into which Christianity brings us in a very strong light.

The old man, the whole old estate is done with in the apostle's mind, righteousness and all; and his mind is Fixed on the new, that is, on Christ Himself; but this as involving his own place in glory, in having part hereafter, in "the resurrection from among the dead," as Christ was: "That I may win Christ." "If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from among the dead"; it is "*from among*" them.

This leads us directly to the great principle of the chapter the earnest undistracted following after this glory, after Christ Himself, and heeding nothing else, counting all as worthless for its attainment. The former chapter, we have seen, presented Christ in His humiliation, leading the heart to the like manifestation of graciousness in our path and ways with others here below. This gives that energy of spiritual pursuit, from the second glorified Man being set before our eyes, which sets us above the world and every motive in it, and everything which added importance to the old self, so as to give its just and heart-enlarging object to the new man; and it makes us heavenly-minded, and withal undistracted in our Christian course.

It is one of the beauties of Christianity, that it gives, through our perfect reconciliation in Christ, the pure peacefulness of affections perfectly happy in an existing relationship, and with it the highest object of hope, which urges to unceasing activity. These are the two forming elements of human nature for good; both in the highest and a divine way are found in Christ.

But to pursue our chapter, which takes up the latter of these principles. We have the fullest element of satisfying glory for ourselves, the prize of our calling above, the resurrection from among the dead; yet all selfishness is taken out of it. What clothed self with honour is, as we have seen, all loss. It helped to set up the old man. The Christian's object is Christ, which implies getting rid of the first altogether. It exalts man but not self. When modern infidelity would exalt man, it simply exalts self. Christianity exalts man, even to divine glory and divine excellency, but it sets aside self wholly. "What was gain to me," says the apostle, "I counted loss for Christ." Learning is gain for self—to be English, French, etc.: to have mine own righteousness as a reputation in the world, or a title with God, is self. I am what others are not. The world wants these motives—of course it does; it has no other. Energy is produced by them, but there is no moral advance. Self remains the spring, the centre, of human activity. We are told

"Self-love but serves the virtuous mind to wake,
As the small pebble stirs the peaceful lake."

A larger circle may be produced round self, but self remains the centre still. "Master, that thou shouldest give us to sit one on thy right hand and another on thy left hand, in thy kingdom." This was self—a good place which others would not have. None of this is found here. "That I may win Christ" is the highest blessing, the blesseddest affections, but all transferring the heart from self to Christ. But see further. It transferred the affections to what in itself was supremely excellent, to an object which was the adequate object of the delight to God the Father. God has given to us to delight in what He finds His sufficient object of delight in too. What a tale this tells of our true

reconciliation to God! Not merely judicial reconciliation to God, which was needed, but the elevation of our moral nature to the measure of divine delights and fellowship with Him; though of course, ever recipient, and glad to be so from love, He ever the divine Giver; but in Christ the one Object of delight. In the creature, though there may be a suited nature, as evidently there must, yet **the moral state of the soul is formed and characterised by its objects**. Here we are made partakers of the divine nature and have divine objects. But this is not now in rest. That will be our heavenly state. We are living in the midst of a world by which Satan seeks to seduce us by acting on the old man.

While there is thankfulness and courage because Christ has laid hold on us, yet Christ before us in hope leads out the affections in energy; and, while it has begun by delivering us from selfish recurrence to our own importance, leads us now in superiority to worldly objects by the absorbing attraction of Christ. We are kept humble by the consciousness that we have not attained, energetic in sanctified affections because we have Christ to attain, delivered from the world by the absorbing power of a divine object acting on the new man, This gives singleness of purpose, and thus undistracted power, while the judgment is formed solely on the way things bear on Christ. Everything is thus estimated in the highest way by a perfect criterion, and that in the affections, though indeed in moral things true judgment cannot exist without this.

Further, though it be in no way the chief or highest element, there is, when the world does come before us, the power of contrast. For all this surely the action of the Holy Ghost is needed; but I speak of the way it operates, not of its gracious source. This gives, moreover, superiority to difficulties. This is the force of “by any means”—not a doubt, but what ever it may cost, whatever road I may have to take, so as I attain, I am content; yea, I can rejoice in suffering and death—I shall be so much the more like the Christ I am desirous of attaining.

Note here, **he seeks the power of resurrection first**; that, knowing the divine energy of this new life, which takes him in spirit out of the present one, the sufferings or death

of the first, as the fruit of devotedness to Christ, were only conformity to Him. And thus, even if it were by such means as death itself, he should attain to the glory of the new state into which Christ had risen. (Not new indeed to Him personally, but to man, to the human nature, which in grace He had taken and carried back with Him into glory.) This gave its full character to his walk as to its daily energy. Having this state of resurrection from among the dead in view, he never could count himself to have attained in this life, nor to be perfect; for, for him to be perfect was to be like Christ in glory. He followed after that he might attain and apprehend that (lay hold upon and possess it) for which Christ had apprehended him. Two things ensued; he followed nothing else—had no other object.

But this was not all. He did follow this earnestly and undividedly. It was not merely that he disapproved of certain things and was inert, but the absorbing power of One had delivered him from all else. But this, while it took his heart off the others, fixed it on this. But this object on which his mind was fixed was always before him, not attained, every day brighter to his spirit, but not possessed.

This kept him looking straight forward, and never occupied with the ground he had passed over. He forgot the things which were behind, and reached forward to those things which were before, pressing towards those things which were before. The man who would stop to contemplate the ground gone over in a race would not get on in it, would soon be passed in it. Self would come in; the manna would breed worms; the heart be off its object.

This gives another marked effect of this energy of the single eye. **It looks exclusively at what is heavenly.** Its calling is on high, its hopes and thoughts fixed on that; not looking, says the apostle, on what is seen, but on what is not seen. This gives a heavenly temperament and habit to the whole man. His conversation is in heaven; his relationships of life are all up there. There is thankfulness and elevation in this. It is God's calling, His calling us *above* and in Christ Jesus. The heart is intelligent as to its source and way.

I do not dwell on what the apostle puts in contrast. Minding earthly things, men are fixed on what can cause no progress, on what takes them off what is heavenly, what is pure and divine. But it goes further; they are enemies of the cross. The cross was death to this world. It marked the place of what was divine and heavenly in this world. The saint glories in dying to the world. He who lives in it, in spirit, is the enemy of that. The end is destruction.

One thing remains, to carry out this hope of the Christian to completion—Christ's coming. We have these hopes, "this treasure in earthen vessels." Christ shall come and change the body of our humiliation and fashion it like to His glorious body. Then what we have had in hope, in desire forming our souls after it, will be actually accomplished in glory. We shall be like Christ and with Him.

Such is the character of energy which delivers from and gives the victory over all that is in the world, setting our affections on things above, not on things on the earth, making Christ Himself, as He is on high, the bright and blessed object of our souls. Chapter 4, as this has run to some length, I reserve for another paper.

It tells us of the calmness and superiority to circumstances which characterises the Christian in this world through faith in Christ.

Philippians 4—Peace

Lausanne, 28 September 1856

Le Messenger Evangelique²⁵: Meditation #239 (1929)

The apostle, when he wrote this epistle, was two years in prison in Caesarea, then two years in Rome. In this position God made him just as useful to the Church by its active jobs. It is, indeed, of his captivity that are dated the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Hebrews, Philemon and the second to Timothy. There are in these epistles, a whole development of the thoughts of the Spirit. Ephesians presents the Church with Christ in heavenly places, Colossians, Christ the Head; in Philippians that we develop milder disease, although there have also misery in Philippi, where Euodia and Syntyche were little agreement together. We do not find in this epistle doctrine, but the circumstances in which Christians are.

The burden of Paul was unable to attend to the care of the Church, but the result of this whole exercise is for him peace and joy. Let's examine what is the foundation.

In verses 4-7 of our chapter, the apostle writes, "Rejoice always in the Lord; again, I will tell you: Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is near; do not worry about anything, but in everything, let your requests to God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." He does not say that their hearts would keep God's peace, but that peace in which God was, He who can not be troubled, neither bothered by anything, fill their hearts.

Their joy was to be *in the Lord*, not in the circumstances, and had to carry that character. In prison, separated from the Church, and the preaching of the Gospel, deprived of its activity, the path of the apostle was closed as an insurmountable barrier. He had to find that, although he was the Lord enough. Plus it was in the pains and

²⁵ Translated using Google

difficulties, he had more issues of concern, the more it was a joy and a peace that nothing can touch. His joy was in the Lord, no evidence anguish could not capture him.

It is the nature of joy in the Lord to arise from an inexhaustible source located so deep that nothing can disturb. On the other hand in the peace of God, everything relates to Him. God was troubled? Does not he know what to do? He forgot his Church? One in whose possession the apostle puts everything shows him that in his weakness, he can rest in God who thinks the Church and cares. Must complete trust in Him to be able to say, "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts." As infinite love of Christ alone! (Eph. 3:19). What a wonderful thing to say: This peace is the peace of God! It's not that there are not concerns for me, but whatever they are, they are not too much for God, when the heart seeks its resource Him.

To be kept in *the peace of God*, we must have *peace with God* which is the foundation of everything, and that's what we'll look at.

Peace with God can not be in a heart that is conscious of sin and is based on something that is in itself. We could not have, in this state, that peace without God. A hardened conscience, a troubled conscience or a perfect conscience before God, these are the three positions in which man can be. Forgetting God is not peace, for as long as I think of him, quietly disappears. As the sinner he tries to stun for not dealing with God, but the inevitable judgment happen anyway. No man, having to do with God can stand in his presence. Hence oblivion, or hardening of the heart. Basically, the man knows perfectly well that he was not peace, as the only peace that it be given to him to enjoy, this is not to think of God. Are you in the presence of God, the full and perfect light shines on your heart? It is peace of perfect consciousness. But you say, I am conscious of sin. In this case, you could not say that the presence of God awakens you any concern. What a terrible thing, this presence, the only happiness of heaven, when we do not have peace! Can you desire, not being at peace with God, to go to heaven? What will you do in the

presence of God, the One who, as soon as you think of Him, totally destroys your peace?

How then have a perfect conscience before God? You can, or one day or one moment through your efforts that never will provide you peace. Gives grace alone, because she has *made* peace. The man can not be at peace with God in the sin he can not hide neither God nor himself. It takes that sin is removed, removed perfectly, so you have to deal with the goodness of God; it must be removed so that God may see more, and may never see it. Can you do that? Can you make you innocent, or will you tell Earl Job: "There is no us an arbitrator who would put his hand on us both?" (Job 9:33). Whether that sin is removed so that God may see more, God must take it off. You can, and no one, except God alone, if one takes in his own perfection. Grace thought to sin and was completely removed and destroyed. Much God is holy, as he is perfectly away the sin of which he attended. He made peace through the blood of the cross.

What is the value of the blood? God assumes he is left *a little* sin? No, the blood of Jesus Christ has made peace, peace with God. The extent of his holiness, God has put away sin; as he does not want sin in His presence, he removes himself sin forever by introducing me to Him by His grace.

It is necessary for me to enjoy, I'm incapable of recognizing, for myself, peace with Him when He washed me in the blood of the Lamb, there is not before him one sin that he could see. Christ did by himself the purification of sins in his own perfection; What a perfect peace with God. He loved me and showed that love by being made sin for me. His love depends not on what I am, but what He is. I have a perfect conscience, because God has purified and I know He loves me because He pulled it from the depths of his own heart. Jesus said, "I leave you peace, my peace I give you," his own peace with Him: He has made peace, He gave it to me.

God can not judge me for the things He cleansed me. You should know that. Can you walk with God that scares you? We have the simple assurance that peace which God

made can not be destroyed, because He has set aside sin forever.

In addition to peace with God, there is the peace of mind in the conduct of every day. If I do what is displeasing to God, it's not that I doubt his love, but I can not be satisfied. If I believe that God gave His Son, and His blood was shed for me, it does not make me doubt his love, when I sin, since it is for this sin that Jesus gave Himself -even, but it shows me an abominable sin in the day. How lightly commit the sin that Christ was dying on the cross? I know that sin can not be blamed myself, but it gives me a judgment of the deepest purest sin, because it was imputed to Christ who suffered for it away. That is the difference between the pain of sin, proper to the Christian, and a bad conscience in the presence of judgment.

I would still speak of a feeling that is far from pure. You sin and you are painfully affected. Is it because you have displeased God? No, because you have destroyed thereby your good opinion of yourself. This feeling is very unfortunate. What ugly thing that our hearts! How it is misleading and cunning, and how it comes from *me* even in our sorrow for sin! Practice peace is destroyed, until sin is judged for himself, judged because of what God is, because of His glory and the glory of Christ. And as the glory of God did not replace our own glory, we have no real peace. Once restored the glory of God in the heart, peace becomes perfect and the soul is restored. You have the same judgment as God about sin, and communion is restored.

There is yet another point. You can not have anything on his conscience, but like all of us, you have the flesh in you. We would like this; we want that. The will is not broken; there is no peace, there is now worried about a thing, a week maybe, no one will care at all. The heart does not need to be able to cross this poor world without anxiety stability. It even bothers to find out what to do when there is nothing to do at all. The will want to run things his way. Affections, lusts perhaps, are not met. Where to find an answer to this? We can not change either the world or ourselves. Man has lost its centre, God, and

he can have no rest. Christ is our centre found. He crossed for me the circumstances in which I find myself faced the same temptations, the same difficulties that my selfishness stops, but with a heart where selfishness has no place. He wants to fill our hearts. Is it in this world, my heart is too big for him, because everything is vanity and vexation of spirit. The world is empty; we can not fill the void, or fill with anxiety. Christ alone can fill the heart, but if it is too big for the world, it is too small to Christ. With Him is rest, rest more perfect circumstances are harsher. I found a friend and my heart is occupied with something other than myself; I rejoice in the Lord. The more we are stripped of self, the more the heart is satisfied. When the heart is with the world, there is nothing that fills it: when he is with Jesus, it is too small to contain it and Christ fills up the overflow. Ah! so I finally found what I need; I am cured of wandering affections and sterile. I have an object that purifies me and focuses my affections: I did not need anything else!

Rejoice in the Lord; you what; but if your heart detaches you from Christ, God will not make you happy away from him. He can not recognize such conditions. He gave us Jesus in the midst of the circumstances in which we find ourselves so that we have an eternal source of inner happiness in Him who knew our concerns, taking all upon him without feeling the weight. The source has dried up: God is for me. If I have a concern and I do not know what to do, I go to Him. It has everything in advance. No sparrow falls to the ground without His will; the very hairs of our head are all numbered and we can not make it become a white or black one. Bring me, he said, worries, they do not care about me, me. I load my peace fill your heart.

God is so for me, I do not have to worry about anything, not indifference, but through faith in His infinite love.

Will you be worried if you have at every moment perfect certainty that God took care of your business? What is missing from the man, because he has abandoned God is to know that God is for him. God gave man the earthly things to enjoy now and in fact, he believed the Devil. Then God said to him: You're wearing now the

consequences and penalties of your mistrust towards me. You must *me* croies. You must jouisses my kindness by faith. For our enjoyment, Christ came in the middle of all the consequences of our unfaithfulness and he was there for us. What is missing in humans, it is the simplicity of faith. I know it is for me; I can be with God.

Mind you, says the apostle, all real things, venerable, just, pure, lovely; if you do, the God of peace will be with you (v.8-9). It's not only that God's peace fill our heart, being weak, we need God *himself*, in the world where we live.

God gives us to understand the basis of simplicity all these blessings that Christ has made peace through the blood of his cross. Under his work, consciousness is made perfect before God forever. The heart relies on Him is restored if it fails, and when a problem arises, he finds joy in the Lord and peace that keeps his heart.

Philippians 4—Christian Experience

Bible Treasury, vol.1 p.255 [1857]

Collected Writings, vol.16, p.299

It is a very difficult thing to say, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark," etc. (Phil.3). The apostle had such a sight of what was at the end, he was so set a-going by it, that he was able to press forward towards the mark.

This epistle is not marked by great doctrines, but by speaking of the Christian course. Such a character of the epistle explains why the apostle speaks of working out your own salvation with fear and trembling—not because God has done everything for you, but "for it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." just as when Israel was redeemed, they could speak of salvation as the end of their race, and not as the acceptance of their persons.

The enemy seemed to have got a great advantage by putting Paul into prison, but it was not at all so. "I know that this shall turn to my salvation." It was not at all a vain

thing, his speaking of his desire to depart and to be with Christ. "Yet what I shall choose, I wot not." He had to choose between Christ and service here, and Christ and rest there.

He says nothing about circumstances, nothing about the Emperor Nero; he leaves them quite out of the account. But "I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith." What we learn from Scripture of the apostle's circumstances when he wrote this epistle, greatly helps us to understand the spirit in which he wrote. Many epistles give us more doctrine, as Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians; but none so gives us the likeness of the practical experience of the apostle in his Christian course.

Christ in resurrection was at the end of the vista before him, and the light of it was shining all down the path. The very thing he desired was to be a partaker of Christ's sufferings. He was looking for constant approximation to resurrection, for it was in resurrection he was to be conformed to Christ. He was taken hold of by grace for it, but now he desires himself to lay hold of it. He could count all things but loss and dung "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus"; and people do not like to be taking up filth. If we are gathering up what is here, we have not such a sight of the glory of the Lord as Paul had.' At the first glow of conversion there is no difficulty in this; it is a very easy thing to count all things but loss then. Paul does not say, I have made all this sacrifice: see what I have done. He does not say, I did count them but dung, but "I do count them," etc. That which keeps his energy alive and fresh is, that he does not run uncertainly.

The first thing to understand is, not that we are in the course to resurrection, but that resurrection has put us in a certain place. This gives us energy in pressing forward to the mark, because we have one object before us. We find it so even in the natural man; he becomes clear-sighted when he has only one object instead of many. But in the things of God it is much more so, because there it is divine sight and divine energy.

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” Certainly it could not be in circumstances, for he was a prisoner. Christians are often a great deal happier in the trial, than they are in thinking of it; for there the stability, the certainty, the nearness, and the power of Christ are much more learnt, and they are happier. Paul could not so well have said, “Rejoice in the Lord always,” if he had not known what it was to be a prisoner. just as in Psalm 34, “I will bless Jehovah at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Why? “This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles.” “I sought Jehovah, and he heard me,” etc. This was what enabled him to say, “I will bless Jehovah at all times.” He had been in trouble, and had been heard when in trouble. It must have been an exceeding trial for one of Paul’s active disposition for service to be kept a prisoner; and this is the time when he can say to the persons who were in the commonplace circumstances which were dragging down their hearts day by day, “Rejoice in the Lord always!” Grace is sufficient for favourable circumstances, but they are by far the most trying (spiritually) to the believer. There is an easy way of going on in worldliness, and there is nothing more sad than the quiet comfortable Christian going on day by day, apart from dependence on the Lord. It must be as with Israel and the manna; there must be the daily gathering and daily dependence upon God. If circumstances come between our hearts and God, we are powerless. If Christ is nearer, circumstances will not hinder our joy in God.

“The Lord is at hand!” just as when you look at a light on a perfectly dark night; though it may be two miles off, it appears quite close. So, the more we prove the darkness of the world, whilst enjoying the love of Christ, the nearer the hope will appear.

“Be careful for nothing,” when he had everything to make him careful, when he knew what it was to be in prison and to hunger in the prison. Why can he say this? Because he had found Christ there. What has a man to be careful for, if Christ is caring for him?

“And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Not, You shall keep the peace of God, but “the peace of

God shall keep your hearts and minds”—the peace in which God dwells; and what peace must that be? Can any circumstances shake God’s throne? God is not troubled about circumstances. Lay the whole burden upon Him, “and the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds,” and you shall have it flowing into your hearts as a river, passing all understanding. The word is, “Be careful for nothing,” not even about the church, though God forbid that we should not care for it.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, 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.” **First, cast all the troubles and cares upon God, and then our minds will be at leisure to turn and think upon whatsoever things are lovely, etc.,** alone—all these blessed things, which, notwithstanding Satan, grew as fruit. If the soul is occupied with the evil, there will be weakness, but if occupying ourselves with the good, the soul will be strengthened.

Now we have the “God of peace.” You walk in the power in which you have seen me walk. ‘Those things which ye have seen and heard in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you,’ not only the peace of God, but the God of peace. You will have God’s power with you. Paul had walked in that path and had found the God of peace with him all the way through.

“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again.” How glad the apostle is to see fruit! Besides rejoicing in the Lord always, he rejoices in the Lord about them: what made him happy was that he saw Christ blessing the saints. There is no such joy on earth (save communion) as seeing the saints walking in the truth.

Verses 11-13. We are apt to take the last of these verses as a general truth, and it is so; but he does not use it in this way here. What we have here is the practical, experimental acquaintance of Paul with this thing. He had been in peril, in want, and in plenty (a far more dangerous

thing); he had found a present Christ sufficient for him in all circumstances. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." He cannot be our strength in circumstances which are contrary to His will. He would have our souls exercised, if not seeing the path straight before us, if we are walking in a path contrary to His will. There cannot be that happy liberty where the path of dependence upon God has been left. When Christians first leave the path of dependence on the Holy Ghost, they find difficulties and uneasiness; but gradually they are apt to get used to it, and then there is less conscience and less uneasiness. **Where a person has left the path of spiritual power, everything takes the form of duties.** The first working of the Spirit of God is to make him uneasy; then there is nothing to do but to go back the way he came. There are perplexities which arise from leaving the simple straightforward path; then the Lord comes in and restores the soul for His name's sake. The Lord does give His people rest on their way; as He did to Israel when the ark went before them to find out a place where they might rest. Circumstances need never hinder the power of spiritual joy. If I am in prosperity or in adversity, nothing can separate me from His love. It is not said, through Christ which strengthened, but "which strengtheneth me": it is a present thing. Verses 14-18. Still lifting them up out of the mere temporal circumstances, and leading them into the consciousness of the connection of the saints with God "a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

"My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus," the God to whom I belong, and who, in a certain sense, belongs to me—the God whose faithfulness I know—who fed me when hungry. who strengthened me when weak. Exceeding sweet is it to see that what Paul had passed through, had brought him so near to God. He has found in all things, in prison, in want, etc., the infallible certainty of being associated with God.

Philippians 4—Thoughts

Bible Treasury, vol.7 p.308 [1869]

Collected Writings, vol.27, p.241

It is a great thing to rejoice always. It is important to consider the apostle's own history in connection with these epistles. When he was writing this, he was in prison at Rome. He had been cut short in his ministry, and as he looked on, he had to say, "All they which are in Asia, be turned away from me," and "All seek their own," etc.; and yet he had something which lifted his heart above it all; not that he was insensible to it, but he knew a superior power. It was as looking at Christ he could rejoice, not in these circumstances. In one chapter in Galatians he says, "I stand in doubt of you"; in the next, he says, "I have confidence in you through the Lord."

The Lord's own path was the same, meeting with disappointments and distresses, on every hand, and yet He prays that the disciples may have His joy fulfilled in themselves. It is living in a power superior to evil; and if I am not living in that power, I should be depressed and cast down by the stream of evil within and around me, instead of rejoicing always. To do this, it requires that the heart should be with Him who has already overcome and sat down.

The first mark of power is patience. Nothing troubled the peace of the apostle's soul, so that he is free enough to think of individuals—Euodias, etc. (v.2)—or to write about a runaway slave. He was passing through the valley of Baca, making it a well. It is a more blessed thing to make trials causes for thanksgiving than our own mercies. "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth." In all his many trying circumstances, he was finding that the Lord was sufficient. He possessed that eternal happiness which enabled him to say, when before Festus, "I would to God" that you were "altogether such as I am."

Are you so happy in your soul that you can say that? The young Christian rejoices in what he has got—his salvation, joy, peace, and so on. The old Christian rejoices more in Christ. The young Christian says, I have got this, I

have got that; but the old Christian says, Christ is this, and Christ is that. Not that this is wrong in a young Christian: in that sense a young Christian cannot be an old one; but if they walk with God, they will soon ripen. So in 1 John 2:12-14, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning"; and while he goes into detail about the young men and babes, he repeats this of the old men.

There is the continual conflict with Amalek, but in the confidence that he has already been overcome. Read John 16:33: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." Run the race "looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of faith; who ... is set down," etc. Do not let any evil or any circumstances prevent your rejoicing in the Lord always; but for this you must be with Him.

[v.5] "Let your moderation," etc. Naturally I like to assert my rights in the world, and if I see injustice done, I like to resent it. Moderation is putting a check upon our own will, for the present content to be put upon this— "The Lord is at hand." When the Lord set His face like a flint to go to Jerusalem, the Samaritans would not receive Him, and the disciples wanted to draw down fire upon them. If you set your face like a flint to go to Jerusalem, you will not be received by those who are half-hearted. "The Lord is at hand."

[v.6] Do you believe that? The character of my whole life will be governed by this, if I believe it. You may say, I have troubles in my family; the saints are going wrong, etc. Well, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything," etc. What do you want? Go and ask God about it. Instead of harassing your own mind about it, carry it to Him: and it is not said He will give you just what you ask, because this might not be for your good; but He gives you His peace. You put your cares into His heart, and He will put His peace into yours. Do all the things that trouble you disturb the peace of God? "With thanksgiving," etc. When I put my affairs in persons' hands, and ask them to see to it for me, they undertake it, and I say, Thank you, although as yet they have done nothing in it; In this state of soul the heart is free to enjoy what I see in others. There is such a

tendency in us to get living in the things of the world, where we could not have the heart of Christ with us.

Verse 9. You walk in the path you have learned of me, and the God of peace Himself shall be with you. Joy is an up and down thing, but peace is something constant and undisturbed. God is never called the God of joy, but the God of peace.

While Christ was with His disciples, during His ministry He never said to them, "Peace be unto you": it was rather, "Fear not." But when He arose, He said, "Peace be unto you." Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross in such a way, that if God rises up in every attribute He possesses, He sees nothing to disturb His peace. I am in the light as He is in the light; and if I have conflict with the world, the flesh, and Satan, I have peace with God.

The test of the true condition of a person's soul is seen in his everyday life. "I have learned," etc. Paul had learnt it; it is not merely saying it. It is a much greater snare to abound than to be abased; but Christ was enough. I get not only peace in the circumstances, but also moral power over them.

"My God," etc. That is as much as to say, I know Him well, and I will answer for it that He will supply all your need according to the riches of His glory. What a reality there is in the life of faith! He may put us through trials, because this is good for us, but He will be with us in them all.

Philippians 4:8—The Superiority of Christ over
Circumstances

Bible Treasury, vol.11 p.374 [1877]

Collected Writings, vol.27, p.244

It is a great thing to have the spirit so free from everything else, as to be able to be thus occupied with “these things.” It is not a healthy thing to be occupied with evil, though of course we must be sometimes.

In Numbers 19, if anyone touched the unclean person, whoever had anything to do with it was unclean till even. You cannot have to say to evil, without getting, in a certain sense, away from God. It may not be like the man who had to be cleansed, and wait seven days; but the mind cannot touch sin without a certain removal from direct communion with God.

It may be necessary to go to a brother or sister who is in evil. I do not mean now temptation: there you get positive evil; but the man who touches is “unclean till even”—a kind of warning against having to say to it. One sees persons who like to pry into evil; but, if in the power of the Spirit, I am occupied with “these things,” which are pure, lovely, etc. I may have to come down, and be occupied for a time, as a duty, with that which God hates.

The principle of Numbers 19 remains the same. It was grace, and to restore communion. There a man was actually defiled. Sin is sin in God’s sight, whatever way I have to do with it; and sin is hateful to God. Even if a man did not know, still he had to bring an offering. It was not a question of imputation here; the ashes of the red heifer were there, the testimony that the sin had all been consumed when the heifer was burned; but something had come in to destroy communion. The ashes put into the water gave the consciousness there was no imputation: that question was not raised; but the man could not go in to God for worship till he were clean. The very putting the ashes in gave the character that sin was judged for the saint, all done away; but then he may have been doing a thing that Christ had to die for. It is a question of holiness and my state, just because there is no imputation.

What he looks for here (Phil. 4) is, that their souls should be in the peaceful enjoyment of these things, what God likes and loves; and the God of peace should be with them. Now, when we meet in intercourse, are these the kind of things that occupy the mind? It may be mischievous talking—that will not do you any good; or it may be idleness, vanity—that is no good either; or it may be talking about people; but how far can God say, I can go there, for they are talking about things I like? “My heart is inditing a good matter, I will speak of the things I have made touching the king.” If the heart is inditing a good matter, we get fellowship and communion; the heart is full, and it comes out.

It is a lovely picture in Luke 1-2: a despised remnant nobody knew or cared about; yet there they were speaking of Christ.

Verse 10. The apostle let slip something here— “now at the last.” He thought it rather a long time coming, and then, to correct it, immediately adds, “but ye lacked opportunity.” He let out that he had really been in need, and it had come at the last. It is beautiful to see the delicacy of intercourse in that way: we get it amongst ourselves. Like everything else, he just took it up for Christ. At Corinth, where they were rich, and fond of money, he would take nothing; but here he is very glad to have it.

But, going back to what was said about our intercourse when we come together, we find “these things” are not uppermost. There are two things: in the first place, if we are full of the Lord, it will come out; but if there is watchfulness, it will come in. It is just our ordinary intercourse I mean. I may have to go and speak about special things, but that is not the point here.

Paul was the expression of the power of divine grace in that which was committed to him. Here were Gentiles who had to learn everything, and he was sent in their way, the expression of divine life, that they might learn what it was: he could say, “Walk as ye have us for an example.”

Truth came only “by Jesus Christ”: that which is “true” characterises the whole thing. “He has given us an

understanding, that we may know him that is true.” “Whom I love in the truth.” But it is remarkable what the apostle says in verse 12. It characterises all the epistle. He is above circumstances, and experimentally he had found Christ sufficient in all things. He had been in hunger, cold, and nakedness, and found Him a wonderful source of content. It was not a general principle, but what he had actually learned; “I am instructed.” **It is more difficult to abound than to be abased.** You are cast on God when you are abased; but when all is comfortable around, then is the tendency to be independent of Him. “I can do all things”: not I go on well, but the presence of positive power; not that I get into a better state, not that the circumstance is changed, or the state of my mind; but power has come in, and put those things away which were pressing upon me. It is “all things”—you cannot get anything for which Christ is not sufficient as a present thing. If we have to die, He is sufficient for us; if we have to live, He is sufficient for us.

These are things to be learned, not known in a moment; but if he had not known what Christ was, he could not have said this. He says, I have learned that all through. It is true Christian experience.

We get the power of the Spirit in all the epistle. Here you have it shewn in entire superiority over circumstances. It is not merely known, but “I have learned.” Then it is Christ strengthening us, strength made perfect in weakness. That is its nature, the character and kind of strength. **“My strength” is not made perfect in people who think they are strong.** We must be brought down to nothing as to strength, in order to know where real strength is; that is what people are rather slow to learn.

You have this in 2 Corinthians 12. Paul wanted to get rid of the thorn, But the Lord says, No, I must have you incapacitated: and then evidently it is My work and power, not yours. You get the two sides of Christian life in that chapter. One was, “I know a man in Christ”; the other, that Christ’s power was known in him. When I come down here, I find myself made nothing of, and then it is Christ in me. You must have weakness: “When I am weak, then am I strong.” We may know we can do nothing

without Him; but it is a different thing when one comes to say, I can do nothing without Him.

In Colossians 1 we get strengthened with all might ... unto all patience, etc. Here he is speaking of his circumstances. But it is a very great thing, and one we are slow to learn, that without Him we can do nothing. We all know it as a truth—all Christians do. It is connected with abiding in Christ.

It is not actual service, though true of it; but you get that more in 2 Corinthians 12. I do not feel the want of Him so much in joy; we do, but we do not so feel it.

Hence, often a Christian, after a great deal of joy—even spiritual joy, will get a trip. I must have all the armour on before I can take the sword.

“My God shall supply all.” A very strong expression, which means a great deal. As I know Him, who has been through all these things, and know what He is to a person in every case. It is not “God,” but “my God,” the God I know, who taught me to abound, and to be hungry. It could not come down lower than that. I see my need, and He is rich. No matter what need I get into, He is sufficient for me. Paul was in a most trying position, not only kept a prisoner, but all his activity totally stopped—a terrible trial to Paul.

“His riches in glory” meet the need. As in Ephesians, when he speaks of all the thought and purposes of God, he speaks of the glory of His grace; when He speaks of my sins, it is the riches of His grace. All the dealings of God are according to what He is in glory, having taken us up in grace. It is all through Christ Jesus, whatever it is; it all comes down, and all goes up, through Christ.

It is a simple thing, but not simple for us—at least we are not simple enough for it. (See Psalm 23.) Jehovah is my shepherd. In Psalm 30 he says, “I shall never be moved. Thou, Jehovah, by thy favour hast made my mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide thy face”—and where was this fine mountain then? But in Psalm 23 he cannot say, Jehovah is my shepherd, till he has been through all the power of evil. Not Jehovah has given me abundance of green pastures (though He does give them), but He is my

shepherd, and then come the green pastures and still waters, but he is not looking at that only. "He restoreth my soul," if he had got into trouble. Then he goes on to death: "I will fear no evil"; Jehovah is the shepherd. If he meets enemies, Jehovah spreads a table for him in their presence, as Joshua did when they went into Canaan. Then he says, "He anointeth my head with oil." He reckoned on Jehovah, and learned to reckon through all the difficulties of the way. For His name's sake He leads in the paths of righteousness, and goodness and mercy follow me all the days of my life; but he did not say that till he had been through all the power of evil. The point is, Jehovah is my shepherd, not, having good things.

When Christ says, "sufficient for thee," it is clear there was something He had to be sufficient for. We need strength made perfect in weakness. God hath chosen the weak things of the world, "that no flesh should glory in His presence." He pulls down all human competency. He makes vessels, it is true, but they are mere vessels. It is weakness here; not failure, but infirmity. What a blessed thing to have Him to go with us, to take care of us, to lift us up, and keep us up!

Restoring the soul is not necessarily after failure, but takes it in. "For his name's sake" He makes good what He is in all His dealings. If I set up to have any strength, that is not according to what He is; and He has to pull me down. He must make the vessel nothing, so that the work shall be His.

It is a great deal to keep self nothing in the heart; we know it is so; but still... . Even a heathen writer said, "You may drive nature out with a pitch-fork, but it will ever slip in." The thorn was not strength, but it made nothing of Paul, and Christ could act, because Paul was put down.

A person gets on, and the flesh takes subtler forms; but I ask the question, Am I just as happy if others are blessed in their service as if I am? All these things are so dreadfully subtle. There might be room for self-judgment if there was no blessing, and quite rightly; but am I content if I know I am doing His will, and there are no

results? There is no standard but what becomes Christ and His revelation.

Self can come in everywhere. In 1 Corinthians 14 it was the shutting out self to covet the best gifts. They were fond of tongues which made a show, and they were told to covet prophecy.

Anything can puff up the flesh; a man would rather be the best thief in the country than nobody at all! Self is so very subtle, that, unless in God's presence, we do not detect it.

Philippians 4—His praise shall continually be in my
mouth

Tract Published by Stow Hill

In the third chapter of Philippians we find the spiritual energy which carries the saint onward in the race to Christ in glory. This chapter treats more of the power which gives him complete superiority over all the circumstances through which he has to pass, not as making him insensible to their sorrow, but able to "rejoice in *the Lord* always."

Nothing is more instructive, or humbling in this way, than the life of Paul. Cut off from the ministry which he loved, shut up in prison at Rome, where he had laboured "more abundantly than they all"; finding, at the end of such glorious effects as his ministry produced, the result was "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me"; and "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"; yet he can say, "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice." You will find plenty of trouble, plenty of conflict, for Satan is not bound yet. The more we go on, the more we shall know the opposition—sorrow in the Church—saints individually going wrong; all these *ought* to press upon our hearts; but we ought to have the power which lifts the heart totally above it; the communion and faith which links up the heart to Christ, and walks with Him—the power, too, to serve others, come what will.

Christ—the “Man of Sorrows,” was the example of this: who so ready to serve as He? “I have meat to eat that ye know not of” were His words. Even Martha, whom He loved, tried to get Mary away from listening to His words. The disciples sought to turn Him aside when He told them of His death; all showed a misapprehension of what He had come for—to “give His life a ransom for many”; yet in the midst of it all, He can ask that His disciples may have His joy fulfilled in them!

If we really have this joy of Christ, we can “endure all things for the elect’s sake,” *because we are in spirit with Him*, and He with us in it all; and He did endure all things for the joy that was set before Him—even the cross. It is not the mere buoyancy of a heart ignorant of the power of evil, or of the opposition of Satan. There is a great deal of this superficial joy, this floating over the surface of things, with many. But it is the *real power*, where the depth of evil and opposition is apprehended, and the power of the *Lord is known and trusted in as above it all!*

What is working now is, “the power of good (of God Himself), in the midst of evil”; and it is paramount to the evil in the midst of which it works. True, the evil is flowing in like a mighty stream which, if not stemmed, will flow on to the ocean to judgment, unless the Lord interfere, as He does in goodness and in mercy, or in judgment, or a scourge. But the *character* of the world until Satan is bound is this, that he is its god and its prince; and, in the midst of a world where Satan is prince, the power of Christ has come in above it all.

If my soul is living in the immediate centre of this power, it will feel the pressure of the evil, but will not be depressed— “In nothing terrified by your adversaries.” The practical daily supplies of strength depend upon the heart’s being with Him who has overcome it all; who has all power in heaven and on earth. Then we know the sure and certain resting-place in Himself, which nothing can touch. True, we have to labour on; as it says, “Labour to enter into *His rest*”; but if the heart is with Him who is in that rest, it has a power which nothing can reach; and the *first* mark of this power, when the tide of evil is present, is *patience*. That which “endures to the end” is

better than a miracle! Thus we learn the graciousness and power, that keeps the *heart free* to think of what Christ has wrought in others; free to be occupied with the whole Church; and yet which can think of every state, even of a slave with his master (Philemon). Paul's affections were fresh for each "true yoke-fellow," as though all had not "forsaken" him; and though all sought their own, it did not hinder the going out of his heart.

Are our hearts living enough with Christ to think of a brother thus? Paul's heart was so with Christ, in the consciousness of what it is to be His, that when he thinks of a brother, it is as one whose name is "in the book of life"! In another place, he says, "I stand in doubt of you," but in the next chapter, "I have confidence in you through the Lord."

"Blessed is the man in whose heart are thy ways." The secret of all was, he made wells of the sorrows. Going through the valley of Baca, it was turned into a well—the blessing from on high, where Christ was, fills the pools.

The history of the apostle is very important in connection with this. In prison, chained between two soldiers, cast, of course, more than ever on the Lord—the Lord was very gracious to him—but he learned, come what will, to "rejoice," not in the prosperity of his work, or in the prosperity of the Church, or of the saints; but to "rejoice in *the Lord* always"!

What holier, deeper, truer, Christ-like feeling is had in these trials! As the Psalmist says (34), "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." How did it come about? "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him." The Lord was his shepherd, therefore he can say, "I shall not want"; not, "I have gotten green pastures." "I shall not want," but because the Lord was his shepherd. "He restoreth my soul; He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." He spreadeth "a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies." He anointeth "my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy *shall* follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," Psalm 23.

Paul, standing before King Agrippa, says, "I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether *such as I am*, except these bonds." He does not say, "I would you were all Christians," but "*such as I am*"! There is a happy man! So conscious of the blessedness he had in Christ; so full of the love of Christ, that he could wish you were as he was! The heart's complete, internal happiness in Christ, so that the trials—trials even in the Church, which are much more deep and real—only carried him to Christ!

Are we so conscious of this blessedness in Christ, that we can say to others, "I would you were as I am"? Do you say, "Only an apostle could say this"? Nay, it is what *every Christian, old and young*, is called to! The only difference is, that a young Christian rejoices more in himself and his blessings; he has a blessed comfort in himself. The fathers more simply *in Christ*, they have got to know Christ, they have a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in intimacy with Him. The young rejoice in the first blush of feeling. It is good and true, what God has given; but in the "pull," going through the world, we find that there is nothing positively to rejoice in but Christ.

The power for this consists in that, the nearness to Christ, that when the evil springs up—the power of Satan present—the heart has to do with Him in resurrection, who has destroyed him who had the power of death; with Him whose mighty, holy arm hath gotten Him the victory; He says, "Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." He *starts us* with this testimony, having gone Himself into a place where evil cannot reach; and we have got Him there, the immovable source of blessing, and rejoice in Him there. He has not taken us out of a world governed by Satan's power, but He keeps us from evil, because we are not of the world, as He is not of the world.

The saints too, when running the race, are to look away unto Jesus, who has begun and ended this whole course of faith; who has met the power of Satan in the beginning, and in the end; tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. He overcame him who had the power of death (that is, the devil), and is set down at the right hand of the Majesty

on high—the victory won. We are to enjoy Him now, high up above, and independent of the things we are passing through. Do not let any present circumstances occupy you. Do not look away from Him to them—but rejoice! Not in yourself in any way, but in *Christ always!*

You must be with Him in spirit for this, because He alone is out of the evil, and is the centre and fountain of good; and what should be seen in you down here is, your “*moderation,*” your yieldingness. Suppose I am happy in Christ, am I looking for my rights in this world? Christ had none! Oh! no, my treasure is elsewhere; I am going out of this world;

I can wait for my rights till Christ has His. Let our hearts be weaned from things here, let us pass through the world as weaned children. Christ passed through it, leaving all to go its own way. In the presence of unrighteousness, the spirit is apt to rise; but let us cultivate the subduedness that *yields*. The Samaritans would not receive Him, and He turns aside into another village. Oh! what a lesson that is! Because He had steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem! The half-hearted would not receive Him, because He was doing the very thing that marked His devotedness to His Father. And so it will be *with you*; the religiously half-hearted will not want you, *if you set your face steadfastly to go right!*

“The Lord is at hand!” He has taught us to wait for Him—to be always “like men that wait for their Lord.”

“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” His peace is better than cares. We have cares and sorrows, true, and we should have more, if we were living more as servants among the sorrows of this world. Not indifferent—Christ was never that. But there is a getting away from Christ in my own heart—a tendency to make one anxious even in caring for others. But I must go and *tell God*, and this carries me so above the cares that I can rejoice in Him.

What does God give to the heart that has given all its cares to Him? An answer? No (though we know He does answer): but *His peace!* Is God’s heart taken up with

circumstances? troubled by them? Is His throne shaken by the folly and the wickedness of the world; or even the failure of the saints? Never! Put your cares, then, on God, and He will put His peace into your heart—the ineffable peace of God! He who knows the end from the beginning—the peace He is in, shall keep your heart and mind through Jesus Christ. There is no indifference, carelessness, or coldness, but supplication, earnest entreaty, and all with thanksgiving.

A man whose heart is filled with thanksgiving, reckoning on God, goes to Him with prayer and supplication, and the soul, having left all on God, feels His hand under the trouble, and can say, “It is His affair; not mine.” *He* is a happy man. He goes through this world in this blessed fellowship with Christ; in the power of the Spirit of God for inward joy, and for outward circumstances; his affections free to go out to his brethren.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, 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.” Hearts free to find the *good* in people. Jesus could find the least bit of grace in a poor soul; His heart was ever ready to enjoy it; “I have meat to eat that ye know not of”; “Mary hath chosen that good part”; “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.” There is always this perception when the heart is kept free to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit in others, as being occupied with *what is good!*

You cannot touch pitch without being defiled, and there is a great deal of pitch in these days. *Thinking with the world*, talking like the world, then the heart gets into the colour of it. *It is not Christ!* The heart set free, lives in the thing that Christ’s heart delights in. Oh! it makes such a difference; living in the atmosphere where Christ’s heart dwells, instead of being dragged after ten thousand other 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.” Not only His *peace*, as in verse 7, but *Himself*.

What blessedness in that name God constantly gives Himself! He is never called the God of joy. Joy is an up and down thing that may be disturbed; there may be cause for joy, yet trouble may hinder the heart enjoying it. Peace is what nothing can disturb; it is calm as the throne of God! “Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen,” Rom. 15. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly,” Rom. 16. “The God of peace shall be with you,” Phil. 4:9. “The very God of peace sanctify you wholly,” 1 Thess. 5:23. “The God of peace ... make you perfect,” Heb. 13:20.

Peace is the effect of a full and perfect work. He has “made peace through the blood of His cross.” Why? Because He has gone through everything that was contrary to God—has borne the wrath (the very opposite of the peace) of God; and the instant He is risen, He comes into their midst and says, “Peace”! And now to us God takes this wondrously blessed name of “*the God of peace*.”

Do your hearts possess that peace? If God rises up with every attribute that He has, can anything disturb it? I can say before God, I am in the light, even as God is in the light, because the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses me from all sin. I may have conflict with self, with the world, or with Satan; but He sets me in that peace which nothing can disturb. Your peace should flow as a river.

Faith is needed to be able to rejoice always in the Lord, the feet going where God would have them go, not *avoiding* evil merely, but walking where *He* would *lead* us in every detail of life—in our habits, dress, conversation, intercourse. Nothing tests the *condition of soul more than everyday habits*.

“I can do *all things* through Christ *who* strengthens me.” It is a different thing to say, “Christ strengthens me,” and to say, “I can do *all things*.” Paul had *learned* it. Blessed thing to find that Christ was sufficient for him; he had learned how to be abased, and how to abound (more difficult, for abundance has the tendency to draw the

heart away from the Lord—He had kept him from that twice). If he had want, He had Christ; if abundance, it was Christ. This was not joy in circumstances, but moral power rising above circumstances, but he had *learned* it; looking at Christ all through; finding it out all the way along. It was *true* when he began his course, but Paul did not *know* it then as he did at the end, when he could speak of it to others as that which he had *learned*. Just as He says, "My God"—blessed word! well known in all sorts of circumstances. "In journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," he could say, "*My God* shall supply all your need!" *I know Him*, and, if you ask me what is the measure, it is "*according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ*"! I guarantee to you all that. Paul found that all sought their own, but it only enabled him to say more completely, "*My God*."

What reality there is in the life of faith—walking in secret with God. Poor hands we are at it; but it is that which no world can touch, no Satan can rob of, and the trials that come out in that path only prove us superior to every circumstance through the power of His grace! God grant that we may know it and Him in it. Amen.

Philippians 4

Le Messager Evangelique²⁶: Meditation #70 (1894)

Paul saw the Philippians in combat and private seemingly immediate care of the apostle, but it gave him an opportunity to present the resources of God himself. They are such, that the Holy Spirit urges us to rejoice always. Christ is our life, our strength and our eternal joy; a Christian can especially rely on him, he is deprived of any outside help. "Rejoice in the Lord" is what Paul tells the church prisoner. Despite all the difficulties, he said: "Rejoice." The Lord's presence and communion are always joy. The life of Christ in us, can not but rejoice in God's presence. Christ is all things in us under the circumstances, if we are in communion with him. Do we need firm, it is our strength; sweetness, it is our sweetness. Finding it, we necessarily find joy. And "the Lord is at hand"; he will arrange all the difficulties, and this is the conclusion of the apostle (v.5).

In verses 6 and 8, we find two exhortations: 1 "Be careful for nothing." The result is the peace of God in verse. 7 Ah! whether, in all disquieting circumstances, we thought that the Lord is near! There were people who preached Christ by restraint; Euodia and Syntyche were divided; Paul was in prison ... but the Lord is near. Just in the midst of these difficulties that the Church presents its requests to God. It belongs to him; the happiness of his children it was in his heart. God can not lose the peace, worry; the peace of God, which boards have determined all things, keep our hearts. Not by our hearts that will keep peace with God, but it is what keeps us.

2 The second exhortation (v.8.) Is that all the great things occupy our thoughts. If Christians, instead of thinking about frivolous things, think about things that are pleasing to God, they remain in communion with him. The Holy Spirit is grieved. Our hearts and minds need to occupation; it is important that they are involved in good

²⁶ Translated using Google

things. The Holy Spirit is delicate, and all that is not of these things grieve the reputable.

In verse. 13: “I can do all things in Him who strengthens me.” This passage could discourage the Christian, when he saw that he could not say what Paul said. The apostle said this at the end of its run, but it had not always been true in his experience, even though it is still true when we look at Christ. He said, “ *I have learned* to be content in myself in circumstances where I am, “and he realized this truth in his heart (verse 11.).

Christ was not more faithful to the end of Paul’s life at the beginning, but Paul had made more Christ’s faithfulness. In principle and by grace, we can do everything we can endure all the difficulties in Christ who strengthens us. We must not be discouraged by not having the same experience as Paul, and on the other hand, we are confident that Christ will never fail us.

Our God will supply all our needs according to his riches in grace in Christ Jesus.