

THE EPISTLE TO THE
PHILIPPIANS.

BY

WILLIAM LINCOLN,
OF BERESFORD, LONDON,

Author of "LECTURES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS,"
"COLOSSIANS," ETC.

(From Notes Supplied by Mr. R. Lundin Brown).

KILMARNOCK:

JOHN RITCHIE, PUBLISHER OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE,
AND THROUGH ALL BOOKSELLERS.

The Epistle to the Philippians.

Introduction.

BY employing the Apostle Paul to write the seven Epistles to churches gathered from among the Gentiles, the Holy Ghost evidently means us to keep all the truth together; learning, and making use of the whole. Not taking a part and leaving the rest, or occupying ourselves with one side to the exclusion of the others. A living Christ as the centre, the rallying-point, and all God's truth to keep us right with Him, is what the Holy Ghost constantly keeps before us in these Epistles. The word "Philippians" means "Those who love horses." The teaching of the Epistle shews how we are to fight, and to surmount difficulties. The key word of the Epistle is that word in chapter iii. 8—"That I may *win* Christ." Paul had seen Him up there in heavenly glory, and the theme of Philippians is how to disregard and count everything loss, in order to reach Him, that I may "win Christ," or "get Christ for my gain." Here we have traced how we are to apprehend that for which we are apprehended of Christ Jesus. The Epistle regards believers as pressing on towards the

mark for the prize of God's calling up on high—through God working in us day by day. In Philippians we have the saints as "fighting ones," in Thessalonians as "victorious ones." Both go together.

"Since I must *fight* if I would *reign*,
Increase my courage, Lord."

Paul was a prisoner in Rome when he wrote this Epistle (chap. i. 13, 14), yet how happy and contented he is! What a triumphant strain pervades the whole! How full of Christ a man may be, even though his surroundings are anything but comfortable. Philippi all through, was to Paul associated with suffering and joy, hard times without, with joy and gladness within.

When the Apostle with his companions in labour went there first with the Gospel, they were "shamefully entreated" (1 Thess. ii. 2), their feet made fast in the stocks of that inner prison, yet they "sang praises" there to God. Their hearts were glad in the Lord, and the very prison became the scene of God's saving grace and power. Lydia and her house, the jailor and his family were converted, and the Philippian church was founded amid persecution mingled with joy (Acts xvi. 11-34). And it grew and prospered even though the world was against it. It held on its way, and there was little to correct, as among the churches of Galatia, or in the church at Corinth.

Chapter II.

VERSE 1.—“Paul and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ.” Not “Paul an Apostle” here as in other Epistles, but associating himself with Timothy who had been with him at Philippi when first the gospel was preached there (Acts xvi. 3), and was now with him at Rome.

“To the saints in Christ Jesus.” The saints first, the servants next. Our highest privilege is as saints: we can get no higher than that. Saints by the *call* of God (Rom. i. 7), not by our attainments or holiness. Made saints first, then called to *live* “as becometh saints,” (Eph. v. 3). We can get no higher than the place where God has put us. He has called us to fellowship with His own Son.

“With the bishops and deacons.” Overseers and servants. We cannot appoint them, we do not choose them; but surely we can see who the Lord has raised up to do the work (1 Thess. v. 12), and acknowledge such. It requires spiritual intelligence and discernment to recognise those whom the Lord raises up to feed and oversee the flock, and to serve Him among the saints. Human appointment is man’s way; “Know them that

labour among you and are over you in the Lord" (1 Thess. v. 12) is God's way.

Verse 2.—“Grace and peace”—the familiar salutation, so often read, so easily forgotten. As long as we are here below, we shall need “grace and peace,” and God has provided inexhaustible supplies of both.

Verses 3, 4.—“I thank my God”—“Always in every prayer of mine for you all.” Thanksgiving and prayer: not the one without the other. Thanksgiving eyes the blessings already received; prayer the needs still to be met. He praised and prayed when in the prison at this church's birth, he praises and prays as the prisoner of the Lord for the saints at Philippi still. It is a sign of real interest in God's saints when we praise and pray for them.

“Making request with joy.” Joy abounds in the Epistle everywhere. Written in a prison, amid surroundings anything but pleasant, yet his soul overflowed.

Verse 5.—“For your fellowship in the Gospel.” We read of fellowship in each chapter of this Epistle (see chaps. i. 5; ii. 11; iii. 10; iv. 14), where it is the same words throughout. It is a part of our warfare to be identified with Christ, His people, His servants, and His truth. To have true companionship in the Gospel, not shirking the cross, or fearing the reproach it brings. Nor did this fellowship in the Gospel dim with time, as alas is too often the case: it went on.

Verse 6.—“Being confident of this very thing.” Paul

was no boaster. He was entirely persuaded. He knew what God's purpose was, and how He would fulfil it. Not only was he confident about his own salvation (2 Tim. i. 10) *but* about that of others also. "He which hath begun a good work *in* you will perform it." He will carry it forward to the end, completing and perfecting it. This is a contradiction to a constant insinuation of the devil, that one must not expect saints to be so hearty for Christ, and so fervent in their love, as when first converted. Here it is just the reverse; the good work begun is carried on. He is assured that these Philippians were to wax brighter and brighter, that they were to continue and increase in every grace, just because he knew that God who had begun to work in them would not cease to do so. What a ground for confidence! What a guarantee! God will finish as sure as He began His work. "Until the day of Jesus Christ." How his eye was fixed on that day! How it filled his soul! "The day of Christ" was to him the grand climax of all. The crowning day, the day of his joy (1 Thess. ii. 16). And these fighting ones were to have the assurance of final victory before they enter the field. They were to have the confidence of victory ere they engaged in the fight. It was this confidence that sustained Paul in all his conflicts; he had full confidence in God. Like as when on the stormy sea in the vessel he could say, "I *believe* God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (Acts xxvii. 25). Need we wonder that a man who could so

speak of God, dared to do great things for Him. And he had the same confidence that God would fulfil His word to the saints at Philippi. He did not anticipate the declension of these Philippian saints, or make his calculations as if they must leave their first love. It was "meet" that he should think thus of them. "I have you in my heart," or rather, as the margin has it, "Ye have me in your heart." Their *affections* were toward the Lord's prisoner, and their sympathies were with him in his sufferings. It is an evidence of the heart being right with God, when we love and care for His suffering saints and servants.

Verse 8.—"For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all." They were his own children in the faith: he had been the means of leading the earliest of the converts at Philippi to Christ, and he therefore bore a peculiar love to them. It is according to God that such should be, and that those whom the Lord gives us as spiritual children, should be cared for and constantly borne on the heart. The sectarian ways of many sadly mar these beautiful marks of spiritual affection, but the Lord esteems them, and will not forget to reward them in that day.

Verse 9.—"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more." They had love, but he desires more, not only toward himself, but toward the Lord and all the saints. When our love to Christ is abounding, the saints will not be forgotten. Love in the saints has its fountain in God. There is not a spark in any of us by

nature. It has to be “shed abroad,” poured into our hearts by the Holy Ghost (Rom. v. 3). And once there it goes forth in two directions (1 John v. 1, 2): first Godward, then to our brethren. Love that lacks the former element is only latitudinarism and admiration of fleshly amiabilities. True love begins with God and Christ, and thus it reaches men. “In knowledge and in all judgment.” The world says “Love is blind.” Not so the love of God, nor ought ours. “In knowledge,” not unreasoning, but genuine, real and true, full of apprehension and spiritual intelligence. When a person is converted, he is to be exercised to grow in grace, to get further on in apprehension of the Divine way and will of God. “And in all judgment,” spiritual intelligence and discrimination. A Christian has the mind of Christ in the same sense as a babe has the mind of a man, but as it grows in years, the mind expands. So too the Christian grows, as his love abounds, he is to have more knowledge of God’s mind and will, and more ability to grasp the deep things of God. This grows by studying Christ.

Verse 10.—“That ye may approve things that are excellent” or “distinguish things that differ.” Losing sight of things that differ, failing to combine and harmonise the truth has done a lot of mischief. It is so common for Christians to get hold of one side of truth and set aside the other, and then wrest the very truth they hold to their own harm. This is a snare to those

who are spiritually minded, if they do not watch. Some one has said, "The devil has different kinds of temptations ; for those who seek to walk in the truth, one sort, for those who walk negligently, another." Oh the wiles of the devil ! The verse shews we all need ballast, and ability to discern and grasp God's truth intelligently. May the Lord keep us from being overmuch occupied with one side of truth to the neglect of the others. "That ye may be sincere," literally—"judged in sunlight." What an expressive word that is ! Nothing doubtful, everything clear and transparent, "judged in sunlight." Self, ways, words, actions, all judged in sunlight. What lives ours would be if this were always so ! It is possible to be so anxious about great things, as to neglect the details of daily life, and so stumble others. On the other hand, to be so careful to obtain the favour of men, as to neglect to study to please God. "Without offence," not stumbling others ; not praying beautiful prayers, and the next moment get in a temper. The former part of this verse encourages us to seek God's light upon our ways : the latter, so to arrange them as not to stumble others. We need the whole truth to sanctify and build us up, and cannot afford to let any of it be unheeded. Oh to be clear, and pure, and transparent, "judged in sunlight."

"Till the day of Christ." That day will manifest in the sunlight fully, all that has really been of God in and about us while down here, and make it sparkle like gems in the light of God. Oh to live and act in the sunlight

of God's presence now, to anticipate the searching light of that judgment seat.

Verse 11.—“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness.” The believer is righteous judicially before God, and in the power of the new life that is in him he “doeth righteousness” (1 John iii. 7); a contrast to the false religionist who feigns to be righteous (Luke xvi. 15), putting it on as an outward form.

Verses 12, 13.—The bonds of Paul, his imprisonment in Rome had brought him within reach of some who could not otherwise have heard the gospel. Thus the enemy’s plans were defeated, and the gospel furthered. Just as it was at Philippi. The work of God there began amid bonds and imprisonment. We have quieter times now, but the devil has no more love for the gospel than he had then. Only he changes his tactics.

Verses 14-18.—Several kinds of preachers are mentioned here. Some were emboldened to preach Christ by his bonds; this gave the Apostle joy. Others preached Christ with an unworthy motive, to create strife and make factions. Yet Paul could rejoice, not in the way they did it, nor in the motive that led them to do it, but in the fact that Christ was preached. He would not judge them, the Lord will do that in the day of the judgment seat, when hidden motives will be brought to light (1 Cor. iv. 5) as well as outward deeds. Christ was preached, but with some He was not the object, or the centre. Let us see that He gets His place, not only in

our words, but in our hearts, and as the One to whom we gather, and seek to bring others. We may not be able to rejoice in the ways of some preachers, or to work with them, yet let us be glad that Christ is preached.

Verse 19.—“This shall turn to my salvation.” Salvation in Philippians is regarded throughout as present and future (chap. ii. 12; iii. 20). It includes deliverance from a great deal more than judgment. “And the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” Every saint has the indwelling of the Spirit, yet Paul prayed for the Ephesians that God might give unto them “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (Eph. i. 17). We daily need the renewals of the Spirit, the continuous supply as it flows from Him, giving power for life and service.

Verses 20-22—This Epistle is as much about death, as Thessalonians is about the Lord’s coming. Thank God there is nothing to be afraid of in death to the Christian. It is not his proper hope—the coming of the Lord is what we are to be looking for—yet if death comes to the believer, it will not separate Him from Christ. “To die is gain.” If our warfare ends there, it will be a victory. But the Apostle puts something before that. “For me to live is Christ.” What an emphatic expression! Would to God we understood it better! Paul not only had life in Christ, but for him to live was Christ. Christ was his object. Yet while he could say that, he was not satisfied as if all had been gained, for in chapter iii. 8 he says, “That I may win Christ.” Christ to him was everything.

He had Christ with him, Christ was his object, and his wish was to win Christ. Christ alone filled his soul, and every other object was set aside. May we know such an experience. It is within reach of us all, thank God.

Verse 23.—“With Christ which is far better,” or as it is in the original—“much more better.” The Holy Ghost takes great pains to assure our hearts that even in the disembodied state which may intervene before the Lord comes, it will be “much more better” than the present. The disembodied spirit will know and enjoy more of Christ there, than is possible now. What will it be when we get the body like unto Christ’s in the resurrection state? We cannot conceive what that will be. Praise be to God it awaits us! So there are three stages here pointed out; good, better, best. It is good to be saved, and in the body to serve the Lord here on earth. It is “much more *better*” to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord. It will be *best* of all when He comes to gather all His saints home together, in bodies like His own, where no sin or sorrow can come, and where no tear shall ever fall. Then there shall be one Lord over all the earth and His Name one ; Satan banished, and sin put down. Then the Lord Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, but He will not be fully satisfied until He has got all His saints safe at home around Himself. This was the joy set before Him, for which He endured the Cross, despising the shame (Heb. xii. 2). Thus the coming of the Lord

Jesus, which is the proper hope of the believer, is grander far than death, although that to the believer is gain, and not now a thing of gloom and uncertainty, as it was before the Cross. There is now a living Man in heaven, and when the believer dies, he goes to be "with Christ." Although the Lord Jesus as the Risen Man is millions of miles distant from earth (the place where the dying Christian is) yet the very moment he is absent from the body, he is at home with the Lord (2 Cor. v. 8). There is no interval, no cessation of the enjoyment of Christ. To live here—Christ: to depart, to be "with Christ." There are three distinct allusions to the believer's death in the Gospel according to Luke—the Gospel of The Man ; they are in chapters xvi. 22 ; xx. 34-38 ; xxiii. 43, and give a progressive view of the truth. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, though dead, are alive to God. They knew Him while here. Their faith laid hold upon Him as the Living God while yet unseen, and they live in His presence and with Him there. The entrance of the dying robber to Paradise with Christ was a further unfolding of the truth ; it was the opening up of a new vista never before known. To be "carried by angels" into "Abraham's bosom" conveys the thought of some period of time elapsing, ere the souls of the righteous reached their destination : on the contrary, to the dying robber the word of the Lord Jesus was "To-day shalt thou be with Me" in paradise ! And now without any interval of time whatever, to be "absent from the body"

is to be “present with the Lord.” How rich and sweet will be the soul’s communion with the Lord in that scene! Like a bird escaped from its cage, we shall be delivered from the body which now so hinders the spirit’s communion with Christ! Oh how sweet, how blessed it will be, to have there a season of rest with Christ, after the toils and turmoils of earth are past, before the glory of the Kingdom shines forth! Do not lose sight of the grand expression “To me to live—Christ,” for if death does not separate us from Christ neither does life. He can reveal Himself to your soul here amid the battle of life, if you do not hinder Him. “If I live in the flesh, this is worth my while”—as the word really is. It was Christ there and Christ here. Oh to so live for and serve Christ! Such a life is truly worth living: to witness for a rejected Christ and serve the members of His body is a blessed thing, and will bring His commendation and rich reward in a coming day. Do not seek how comfortably and easily you can get along through life, but make it your aim to live for Christ and serve Him, even if you have to rough it for Him down here. It will be worth your while to do so: it will pay in the end.

Verses 25, 26.—He has Christ and the Church so fully before his heart that self has no place. He decides the case for himself, so he will remain and serve. How fine it is to see such unselfishness! He has no thought of his own interests, only the glory of Christ and the gain of his saints. He was not solicitous what the Emperor

would say ; he had confidence in God, and had the answer from Him that He would be delivered and again go forth to serve.

Verse 27.—“Only let your conversation (citizenship) be as becometh the Gospel of Christ.” He was anxious that their manner of life should be as becometh the Gospel. It brought them salvation, and now they were identified with it, and with the fellowship of spreading it abroad, and it was important that their lives should be worthy of it. How it would have depressed him to hear it was otherwise, and how it would have hindered the Gospel in its work among others. Let us ever remember that the manner of life we live as God’s saints, either helps or hinders the Gospel, and commends or scandalises the truth. “Stand fast.” The tendency in our day is to relax and be off our guard : to take things easy and let others do the same. “Stand fast,” reminds us of our individual responsibility. “In one spirit, with one mind” views our corporate testimony. There is to be no discord, no jarring, no pulling different ways, but fully united. And see the Holy Ghost’s way of thus knitting saints together. First of “one spirit,” next of “one mind,” or soul (R.V.) It is like that remarkable word in Acts iv. 32, “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul!” If hearts are drawn to Christ and fused together in His love, minds will be made one by subjection to His Word, and then judgments will be similar. It will not be “agreeing to differ,” or each believing and

acting as he likes, but all will be controlled by Christ. Man's way of unity is from without, sitting on the same bench, holding the same views, contending for the same things. God's way is to set the heart and mind right, then "striving together for the faith of the Gospel" will result.

Verse 28.—“In nothing terrified by your adversaries.” There is not perhaps so much of open opposition now as in early days to the people of God. Then it was the adversary as a “roaring lion” (1 Pet. v. 8) : now he assumes the serpent character (2 Cor. xi. 2), and deceives by his subtlety, but the world will always hate the true people of God (John xv. 20). From Abel’s time it has been so. The Cross was the full climax of the manifested hatred of man to God, and to those who stood for Him on earth, as His faithful witnesses. To hate a saint of God, to persecute one who is true to God, is one of the most awful proofs of human depravity, and a sign of how ripe for hell the man is who does it.

Verse 29.—“Unto you it is *given*”—the word is “grace.” It is part of the grace of God bestowed upon the saints to give them a share in suffering on Christ’s behalf. Just think of a little suffering being part of the grace of God bestowed upon us! How this should nerve us to suffer and brave a little opposition for Christ’s Name. The Apostles rejoiced when called upon to suffer (see Acts iv. 21). God knows how we need to be reminded of this, and the whole of this beautiful Epistle

encourages us in the warfare in which the grace of God has given us the honour of being engaged. The fight must precede the victory : the cross is before the crown.

Verse 30.—“Having the same conflict.” They had seen what he endured at Philippi, and he had the same agony and contest still as the prisoner of the Lord at Rome, and they were not to shrink from their share of it, seeing it was a favour bestowed upon them on the behalf of Christ in whom they believed.

Since I must fight if I would reign,
Increase my courage, Lord,
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

Chapter XX.

HE opening words of this chapter are intimately connected with what has gone before. “If there be *therefore* any consolation.” “Therefore” shows that the suffering and consolation are linked together. What a motive for endurance and bearing up in the fight! “Consolation in Christ”—“comfort of love”—“fellowship of the Spirit”—“bowels and mercies”—what an array of beautiful things! The words “If any” are four times found. What an appeal to the heart! Would that they were more known and enjoyed among us. The Philippian saints had shewn that they possessed them in the past (chaps. i. 7-9; iv. 10,15), and had manifested them toward the Apostle, now he desires that they may fulfil his joy by having them in fuller measure among themselves. The things mentioned in verse 1 are the motives to what the Apostle pleads for in verse 2.

Verse 2.—“Of one accord, of one mind.” “One accord” means of one soul. Oh, how intensely earnest the Holy Ghost is that the souls of God’s people should be united: that they should be fused together by the love of God, one heart and one soul actually there. “Did not our *heart* burn within us while He talked with us by

the way" (Luke xxiv. 32). "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul" (Acts iv. 32). What "fellowship of the Spirit," what "bowels and mercies" were among the saints of those early days!

"The saints were of one heart and soul,
And love to Christ inspired the whole."

This is the secret of all true unity: apart from this all else is mere empty form and boast. "Of one mind"—literally—"thinking the same thing." It is a serious thing for Christians to have different "views" of God's truth, and as a result to act differently, and become divided among themselves and before the world. The Spirit of God teaches the same thing" to all, and the Word of God is the one rule of faith for all the saints, and for all time. Differences on matters regarding which God has spoken, ought not therefore to be regarded lightly. One must be wrong, both may be, and it is a solemn matter to err in the mind of God, and we shall hear of it at the judgment seat. The more we cleave to Christ, and are taught of the Spirit, the more shall we be of one mind in the Lord, not agreeing after the fashion of men, but taught by the one Spirit, from the one Book, we shall grow into oneness of mind and judgment in all things. This is the way to bring about true unity, "and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (chap. iii. 15).

Verse 3.—“Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory.” This shews in what spirit the warfare is to be carried on. “Strife,” putting down or out-doing others is not to be our motive. “Vain-glory”—empty pride, the bringing into prominence of self. Not only will our service, but the hidden motives of the heart that prompted it, be laid bare at the judgment seat of Christ (1 Cor. iv. 5). How small some of the things that are highly esteemed among men will appear there! Let us anticipate the time of that judgment seat, by scrutinising our motives in the presence of God and by the light of His Word. “In lowliness of mind”—the same word as “humility of mind” in Acts xx. 19, and “humbleness of mind” in Col. iii. 12. The perfect Servant could say, “I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. xi. 29). There is a false humility, which doubts salvation, and assumes a low place, but this is the devil’s counterfeit of true humility, which takes the place assigned to it by God, and abides therein doing the work or enduring the trials meted out to it without murmuring or clambering for a higher place. “Esteem others better than themselves.” The word “better” seems a hard word to nature. It can only be reached by denying self, by continual warfare against proud thoughts of self. I wonder how many of us have got into this, or try to get into this state of mind?

Verse 4.—“Look not every man on his own things.” Selfishness is natural to us; and by yielding to it we lose much. Occupation with “our own things” is the greatest

hindrance to true fellowship. "All seek their own" (verse 21), is just as natural to man as it is for water to run downhill. The only way to overcome it, is by opening our hearts like the sunflower to take in the warm beams of His love, and thus make them expand, and the more of that love of His that we thus take in, the more shall we be delivered from self, and looking only to our own things. Divine love welling up in the heart, gives a Christ-like care for others, and a real interest in their joys and sorrows.

Verse 5.—The perfect example of this was seen in the Lord Jesus. No one ever looked upon the things of others and set Himself to serve as He did. "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20). *Serving* and *giving* were characteristic of Him. He came not to be ministered unto, but "to serve, and to give His life a ransom" (Matt. xx. 28). "Let this mind be in you." Then our service will not be fitful, but the fixed purpose of the heart and mind.

Verses 6-8.—These verses trace the path of the Lord Jesus from equality with God, to the death of the Cross. What a wonderful path was His! He abased Himself, and has been exalted. Satan sought to exalt himself, and has been abased; and Eve fell because she wanted to "be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. iii. 5). Here in the scene of man's rebellion and disobedience, the Lord Jesus trod the path of obedience, going lower and lower until it ended at the Cross. Farther down than this He

could not descend. From thence God exalted Him, far above all heavens. The path of Christ is here traced by the Spirit: in chapter iii. the path for the believer—"That I may know Him."

Verse 6.—“Who being in the form of God.” I do not know of language stronger than this “Who *existed* in the form of God.” “The Word was with God and the Word *was* God (1 John i. 1). He began at the top, on equality with God, yea *He was* God. Some there are who deny this boldly, many who would fritter it away and weaken it. But we must hold it fast, with an unrelaxing grasp: it is fundamental to the Gospel. Our first parents fell because they wanted to be on equality with God, but He who had no need to clutch at equality with God, for He *was* God, came down. This verse takes us back to the time when there was no creature: before a star was in the firmament He was there, the “I am” of Eternity, co-equal with the Father. Whatever form God has, Christ had. “Thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” The allusion is to Adam: he sought to be as God and he fell. Christ was at the top to begin with, He could get no higher. But He chose to make himself inferior. He did not esteem His equality with God an object of plunder. Had he not been God it would have been no humiliation to be a servant, nor could it be a stoop to take such a place. The highest creature is but a servant, and can never rise above that position, but is bound to stay where God has put him. But Jesus volun-

tarily took that place, which shews He was no creature.

Verse 7.—“But made Himself of no reputation”—literally, “Emptied Himself” (R.V.) Of what did He empty Himself? This is a question difficult to answer, and our wisdom is not to dive too deeply into what God declares to be a “mystery” (1 Tim. iii. 16), or to pry into what is beyond the finite mind of men. He did not and could not cease to be God, yet He parted with the glory which He had with the Father “before the world was” (John xvii. 5). He who was rich, for our sakes became poor (2 Cor. viii. 9), so poor that He had not where to lay His head in the world His hands had made. “And took upon Him the form of a servant,” literally “a bondservant—a slave,” and was made in the likeness of men. These two expressions, “The form of a servant” and “the likeness of men,” tell what is meant by “He emptied Himself.” That He who was “in the form of God” should stoop so low as to take “the form of a bondservant,” is what we cannot understand; we simply believe it because the Holy Ghost has told us, and bow our heads in reverent worship. He was not bound to become a servant. He chose it of His own voluntary will. Oh the wonders of His love! we shall know it more fully when we see Him as He is, and when we see no longer as through a glass darkly, but face to face.

Verse 8.—“He humbled Himself.” There are two explanations of this: 1, “He became obedient unto

death": 2, "The death of the Cross." What a sweep ! What a path ! Having of His own choice become a servant, He learned obedience ; we are to be made like Him, and to learn it also. Once it was strange to Him, and to us. He learned obedience (Heb. v. 8), by being *above* it, we learn it by being *beneath* it. He was the only perfectly obedient servant God ever had upon earth. His delight was to do His Father's will (Ps. xl. 8). His meat and His drink was to always please Him (John iv. 34; viii. 29), and that path of obedience led Him on to the Cross. The path of obedience is a path of humiliation and suffering. This is the path that Jesus trod, and in which He beckons us to follow. It is easy enough to obey fitfully, to do what is pleasant and which involves no cross, but a persistent, steady purpose to obey God, will bring us into reproach and abasement before the world. This is what makes that path unpopular. A Christianity that will please the flesh, and that will be well thought of in the world, is the snare into which the devil will seek to lead us. Let us beware of his wiles, and ever remember that to follow Christ fully, putting our feet into the footprints He has left, brings suffering and loss. "The death of the Cross"—a death of ignominy and of shame, a felon's death. Whoever could have conceived of the Son of God, the Creator of heaven and earth hanging on a cross between two thieves ! That Mighty one who made every star in the sky, left to die alone ; to say in the agony of His soul—"I am

a worm and no man." He went down step by step until He could get no farther ; the "death of the Cross" was the lowest place. Then God put forth His hand. That perfectly obedient one was the Lamb of God, and from the depths of His humiliation, God raised Him up to the highest pinnacle of glory.

Verse 9.—"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him." He trusted God in the depths of his humiliation and suffering, and God honoured Him by raising Him up and exalting Him to the throne. What an encouragement to go on trusting God, even when all seems to be against us, and pursuing the path of implicit obedience, even when it seems to bring nothing but shame and loss. No one ever lost by trusting and obeying God : in the long run it will be found to have been the only path of real prosperity and reward. "The Name which is above every name." The Name of Jesus once written on His Cross of shame, and still despised and rejected of men, shall yet be owned and honoured above every name. How it will gladden the heart of God and cause His saints to sing for joy, to hear that Name extolled and exalted in all the earth beneath and in the heavens above. And how it grieves God's heart to see any other name exalted above the Name of Jesus now. How does it affect us ? Do our hearts grieve to see other names put up alongside of His, or do we connive with it, or glory in it. Even now, His God has exalted Him "far above all principality, and power, and *every name* that is

named" (Eph. i. 21). Do we give Him that place, and seek even now to own His claim as our only Lord. On the transfiguration mount God would allow no other name, however honoured as His servants, to be put up alongside of His, and God will yet see that His place and His honour are given to the Lord Jesus, and that His claims are owned by all. How our hearts shall join in that universal song to "Crown Him Lord of all."

Verse 10.—"In the Name of Jesus every knee should bow." His saints shall bow and own Him willingly; His foes compulsorily; but every knee must bow, for all must own His Lordship and every tongue confess it, to the glory of God the Father. The former is the owning of His personal glory as Jehovah. The other His acquired glory as the Lord. As Peter told the Jews at Pentecost, "God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts ii. 36), so the owning of that will be to "the glory of God the Father," who hath placed Him there. Oh what a Being is the Lord Jesus! In the bosom of the Father, the Creator and Sustainer of all things; in the manger at Bethlehem, an infant of days; in the world a despised stranger; and on the Cross a sufferer, and a sacrifice for sin. Now exalted on the Father's throne as Lord of all, and presently to sit upon His own throne to reign and be owned by all. His smile will gladden all in heaven above; His laugh will fill all in hell with awe. "Every knee shall bow." In Colossians i. 20, we are

told He will re-adjust the relation of all things in heaven and earth. The real inhabitants of heaven are not brought there yet, they are the saints redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. These will lead the worship of the heavenly host above (Rev. v. 8, 9), and be first to own His claim and worth. "In heaven." Those "on earth," His earthly people Israel, and the nations, will own Him as their King, for in that day there shall be one Lord and His Name one (Zech. xiv. 9). "Under the earth"—even His enemies shall be made to own the Name and confess the greatness of His glory, but there is not a word to indicate that they will be saved. He has had many bold and defiant enemies, but they were only so while the breath was in them. In hell there is no defiance and no infidelity. The devils believe and tremble, and the lost have to own too late their folly, in despising Him as Saviour and Lord, who was the Sent One of God to die, and the Exalted One to rule.

Verse 12.—"Wherefore, my beloved." The word "wherefore" connects with what has gone before. It is as if the Holy Ghost has said, Pursue the same path, trust in the same God, and He will see that you are well rewarded. "Ye have always obeyed." They had made a good start in the path of obedience, and their obedience had been "much more" since he had left them, but they were to go on and on in that path, treading the path that Jesus trod, even if it led them down and deeper down, and so give up everything as He

did in obedience to God's will. What had He when He reached the end? A Cross, and a borrowed grave! Then God raised Him to the throne. Thus were they to work out their "own salvation." Notice, it is not work *for* your salvation, for salvation is brought by the grace of God (Titus ii. 11), and immediately a sinner believes on the Lord Jesus Christ he is saved (Acts xvi. 31). How well the jailor and all the rest of the saints at Philippi knew that. But now that salvation was their "own" they were to work it out, according to the perfect pattern shown in the foregoing verses. Salvation is viewed in various aspects in the Word. In the *past*: "By grace ye *are* saved" (Eph. ii. 10). "Who *hath* saved us" (2 Tim. i. 8). In the *future*: "Now is our salvation *nearer* than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 10). And here in the *present*: "Work out your own salvation." It must be "our own" before we can work it out. Christ has earned it *for* us: God has given it *to* us, and if God says it is mine, I am sure He will never take it from me. But I am told to work it out, after this pattern, "Give up get down, be obedient." Three short words, easily uttered, but all opposed to the way of the world, and alas! to the way of many who profess Christ's Name. So it *is* a real conflict and agony, but the recompense is sure. See where God has put that perfectly obedient One, who went down to the death of the Cross! Is not that enough to assure us that the path of humiliation and obedience is the path to glory. "With fear and

trembling"—not fear of being lost, but because we are in the wilderness with danger all around, and with the flesh within ever seeking to lead us into disobedience and insubjection to God.

Verse 13.—"For it is God that worketh in you." Each movement in real spiritual life, each step in the path of obedience is the work of God the Holy Ghost in us. Oh how near this brings God to the soul : "It is God that worketh *in* you." The Holy Ghost always leads the saints along the same path of obedience in which Christ walked, and will lead them onward and upward to the same goal.

Verses 15,16.—"That ye may be blameless and harmless." Words are not enough. It is possible to be very fluent and fervid, and yet lax in our lives and unlike Christ in our actions. "Actions speak louder than words," and the world looks at the ways and works of God's people. No one should be able to say a true word against us. We are to be "blameless"—without rebuke. The apostle tells of some who were not so in this Epistle. Some were bent on "seeking their own"; others were "minding earthly things." These were certainly not shining as lights, or "holding forth the Word of life." It is a sign of real fellowship with Christ if one is shining and serving, shedding forth the heavenly light and holding forth the life-giving Word. "Sons of God without rebuke." All believers are sons, for God never gives salvation and then withdraws it, never gives life and

then quenches it ; but here is the manifestation of that new life, and that new relationship. God would not only have us as His sons, but He would have us so to live that people around shall not be able to say a just word against us. A man who has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him—and all God's sons have—ought to have power to so keep self down and shew forth Christ, that people will see and feel that Christ is in him. He has power to curb the passions and lusts of the flesh, and to overcome the world.

Verse 16—“That I *may* rejoice in the day of Christ.” He had the judgment-seat in view : evidently it filled His soul in all His service ; he carried the remembrance of it ever with Him. That will be the day that will test our work of what sort it is, and when the Lord will reward all that has been done for Him, and to His pleasing. These Philippian believers would be stars in His crown in that day, for they not only had life, but were shewing it, and holding out the Word of life to others. The Lord had joy in them, as He has in all obedient ones, and Paul had joy in them, and looked forward to them as his “crown of rejoicing” in the day of Christ. What a joy to the true servant it will be, to see in that day the full fruit of his toils and tears all shining in the image of Christ.

Verse 17.—“And if I be offered.” Here is a bright instance of unselfishness. The apostle views the Philippians’ faith like a sacrifice, his own life like the oil that

was poured out upon it. See, too, the lowness of mind of this unselfish and devoted man. He regards theirs as the great thing, “the sacrifice”; the surrender of his own life as a very little thing, only a drink offering, poured out upon the sacrifice. Oh that there were more of such devotedness and lowness among the saints of God! How like the perfect Pattern was the apostle! How closely he followed in the steps of God’s lowly Servant, whose devotion led Him on to the Cross.

Verses 19, 20.—“All seek their own.” A striking contrast! Some seeking to follow closely in the footsteps of Christ, others seeking their own, and living selfish lives, yet professing Christ’s Name. People nowadays hardly let the glory of Christ, or the claims of Christ enter their calculations unless for their own private good. Rest assured, that if you put Christ in the second place and your own things in the first, you will hear of it at the judgment seat. The Holy Ghost makes two exceptions: He delights to record the faithfulness of God’s saints, even of individuals in a day of failure, when the mass are in a state of decline. “Ye know the proof of Him.”

Timothy was Paul’s “own son in the faith” (1 Tim. i. 2), and as a son with a father he had served with him. Young believers generally become like those whom they company with. How blessed to see them growing up to follow in the footsteps of faith, “imitators of *us* and of the Lord” (1 Thess. i. 6). And how

important that those acting as “guides” in the Church should so live that younger ones may not stumble. “Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever” (Heb. xiii. 7, 8).

Verses 25-28.—Epaphroditus is another example of unselfishness. “He was sick nigh unto death.” Probably he got his sickness through travelling as the bearer of the message and gifts (chap. iv. 18) from the Philippians to Paul. What a bright example of devotion to Christ! How few give up their lives in service to Christ! How one feels rebuked by such instances. Paul could not heal Epaphroditus ; he could pray for him, and it is implied that he did. “God had mercy on him.” Sickness is often permitted to continue that we may be led into deep exercise of soul, and made partakers of His holiness. It is not always sent in rebuke, but we should be exercised to learn why it is allowed. When a person was healed miraculously in those early days, I have no doubt the Spirit of God caused the healer and the healed both to know that it would be for the glory of God, and when otherwise for the same reason. Life may be prolonged not to God’s glory, as in the case of Hezekiah (Isa. chaps. xxxviii and xxxix).

Verse 30.—“For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death.” It is a rare thing to break down in real work for Christ. It seems like another climate from what one is accustomed to nowadays. “All seek their

own." How delightful to Paul to record the devotion of Epaphroditus! How sweet the fragrance of it wafted to the courts of heaven. "For the work of Christ." What a motive! Will Christ be in his debt? Nay: He will reward him abundantly, and all who serve from love to Him. Shall we spend our little while down here serving Him, or in heaping up wealth and making ourselves as comfortable as we can on earth as if it were our home?

Chapter III.

N this chapter the apostle traces the path of the believer as in chapter ii. he traces the path of Christ.

Verse 1.—“To write the same thing.” He had written about the Lord Jesus being in the form of God, then about Him coming down and becoming obedient unto death. Now he is about to shew the path of the believer in following Christ. “The same thing” in the Christian as in Christ. How closely this associates our path with His? “To me indeed is not grevious”—as if it would be to some. People who are bent on self-seeking or taking their own way, do not care to hear about the narrow path of devotion and obedience to the Lord Jesus. The difference between the path of the Lord Jesus and our path is, that He came down from the bosom of the Father with His eye on the Cross, to judge evil and to shew God’s abhorrence of it. We begin by gazing on a Christ in glory, and learn to give up all down here to “win Christ”—or to have Him as our gain. In one sense we begin our course from the bosom of the Father also, for we are brought to God through Christ, and are folded to His bosom as His sons

before we give up anything, or take a single step in the path of obedience. He makes us His sons and gives us the place of sons first : then He says, “My son, give Me thine heart.” It is not a word to a *sinner*, but to a *son*. It is an inversion of the Divine order to ask a sinner to give anything ; he must be a receiver from God before he can be a giver. Once saved, and the love of God filling his heart, he must give Him back a little of his own. And what have we that we did not receive?

Verses 2,3.—“Beware of dogs”—unconverted, religious Judaizers. They called the Gentiles dogs, and here the Holy Ghost brands them with that name. Dogs fed on offal, and that is the word used in verse 8, where the apostle is alluding to his former life as a Pharisee which he threw away and counted as offal, fit only for the dogs. All his former religion was fit only for the dogs. “Dogs” in our day are those who put ordinances, forms, and ceremonial religion in the place of Christ. “Without are dogs” (Rev. xxii. 15). They who have no place for Christ now, shall have no place in the coming glory. “Beware of evil workers : beware of the concision”—what names the Holy Ghost gives to those who would put their fleshly piety and empty forms in the place of Christ ! Nothing is of any value in the estimation of heaven that does not spring from and lead to Christ. What a contrast to fleshly religion is verse 3 ! The flesh counts as nothing : Christ is everything : to Him the Spirit leads : in Him the soul rejoices, and through

Him in the Spirit worship ascends to God the Father.

Verses 4-6.—Here is a picture of Paul the Pharisee, the advanced religionist, the zealous persecutor. In his days, Phariseeism was the popular religion ; in our days it is popular to be evangelical, and you may be so without having Christ. This ought to lead to self-examination. Paul was all that he was “ignorantly and in unbelief.” When he compared himself with others as a Pharisee, a man with a religion according to the flesh he could say, “I more.” He had advanced beyond them all (see Gal. i. 14), yet when his eyes were opened he saw himself to be “the chief of sinners” (1 Tim. i. 15). Yes, the Holy Ghost caused this same man who describes himself as a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and touching the righteousness of the law blameless,” to tell us he is of sinners “the chief.” And you may be assured that what the Holy Ghost inspires him to write is true : He never speaks flippantly. People talk about being “sinners” often without believing or realising what it means, but Paul felt it. There is no contradiction between the two accounts ; one shews him according to man’s standard, chief of the religion of the Pharisees, the pattern of fleshly religion ; the other shews him as measured by God’s standard, and according to the estimate he formed of himself there, as “chief of sinners.” Surely this ought to make us search and examine ourselves in the presence of God, who seeth not as man seeth, but who looketh upon the heart. Oh, to be real and genuine in

His sight! “I more.” He was the most advanced religionist of his time, at the very top of the tree, yet when he saw a risen Christ in glory, it was all gone like a dream. That sight, and that voice which spoke to him as he journeyed to Damascus, changed his estimate of it all. Henceforth his mark was Christ—“Christ for me,” and all else he counted offal and cast it to the dogs. As he says to the Galatians “It pleased God to reveal His Son in me” (Gal. i. 14). It was Christ *in* him that changed all around. Oh to have the heart full of that precious, living Christ! What lives ours would be!

Verses 7, 8.—Paul reckoned “gain” and “loss” differently from the world. Christ was his “gain”: everything that detracted from Christ or hindered from apprehending Christ, “loss.” It mattered not what it was, it must go, yea, it did go for Christ. “I have suffered the loss of all things”: that was a big thing to say. Was he sad? Nay, he rejoiced. He counted them all as “offal” for “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.” He had seen Him in glory, heard His voice, felt His touch and now he longed to know more of Him and to be with Him. What a power there is in the person of Christ to draw the heart and deaden it to all earthly things! “That I may win Christ”—that is have Christ for my gain.

Verses 9, 10.—“And be found in Him.” Of course he was already in Him, as to his standing before God, but he would be found in Him only as His object.

Noah built the ark, was saved by it, and dwelt in it, so would Paul in the face of all obstacles, difficulties, losses, be found *in* Christ, abiding in Him, making Christ his all, not merely his Saviour. “Christ Jesus *my* Lord,”—the one who owned him, and whose will he obeyed. Many nowadays speak well of Jesus as their Saviour, but when His claims as their owner and Lord are presented, they shy off. Love delights to own His claims as well as sing his praise. “That I may know Him.” Who knew Him better? Yet all Paul’s knowledge of Christ only whetted his appetite to know Him more. Oh how simple it all is! To have the heart for Christ, the eye fixed on Christ, the ear open to Christ, To have a living Christ as the object of the soul, to have to do with a living Christ day by day. To be knowing His love better and better. He has called us to know Himself, not His salvation or His heaven only, but Himself. Do we respond to that call better and better? Does it sound in our spirits, captivate our hearts, and make us more eager to know Him and be with Him?

“The power of His resurrection.” The same power that raised up the Lord Jesus from among the dead, has wrought in us, “we are raised together with Him.” That power still working in us (Eph. iii. 20), is able to keep us following after and going on to know Christ. “The fellowship of His sufferings.” Putting our feet down where His feet trod. The same path below, the

same glory above ; full identification with Christ, no matter what it cost him, Paul would have it. "Being made comfortable unto His death." He would be like his Master, even though it lead him to lose all—even life itself. Jesus became obedient unto death ; He pursued the path of self-surrender though it led to the Cross, and Paul would joyfully follow Him.

Verse 11.—"If by any means I might attain." There is no thought of hesitation as to whether he would reach it, but he meant no matter what road he might travel, or what he might lose to reach that Christ he had seen in glory. "Unto the out-resurrection, the one out from the dead ones." There are two "outs" in the Greek here. There is a resurrection *of* the dead, and a resurrection *from* or "out of" the dead. The latter is what Paul refers to here, when the dead in Christ alone shall rise at His coming to the air (1 Thess. iv. 16). This was his hope, as it is ours ; nothing short of being in Christ, with Christ, and like Christ would satisfy him.

Verse 12.—"Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfected." He had not yet reached the goal. It is the same word as is used of Christ in Heb. ii. 9, "To make the Captain of their salvation perfect." That He might be a perfectly sympathising Saviour with His suffering people. Paul had not yet been perfected, but he had set his heart on full identification with Christ, and if it cost him his life he would aim after it. "If that I may apprehend"—may grasp.

It is a beautiful thought. Christ has *grasped* His people: He will never relax His grasp. Not one of them shall ever perish. He has grasped them all for glory at the end, and for suffering now. He Himself was a sufferer here, and it is the will of God that He should be up there the sympathising Head of a suffering people. If we suffer here, it shews we are grasping Him, being identified with Him here as well as there. “If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. viii. 17).

Verse 13.—“Forgetting . . . reaching forth.” He would not live on past battles, victories, experiences; the Lord will remember these. Be it ours to “reach forth,” to fix the eye steadfastly upon Christ up there, and tread steadily the path that He has marked out, with all the energy, all the devotion of the soul, nothing being allowed to turn us aside for one moment from pressing on to the goal. “One thing I do”—just one thing; to reach a glorified Christ.

Verse 14.—“I press toward the mark.” It is an evidence that grace has laid hold of a man when he lets the things of the world go by, and presses heavenward, Christward. It shews the Spirit of God is at work in him, lifting him upward, making Christ known to his soul.

“For the calling up on high.” Chosen in Christ before the world was; redeemed at the Cross; called, sealed, kept by the Holy Ghost, and the crowning day

of all will be, when by His power the saints are raised and fashioned like unto Christ. The work was begun long ago, it goes on day by day, and He will finish it when Jesus comes.

Verse 15.—“Let as many as be perfect.” The perfection here is that of a person fitted to run a race. Perfection is used in Scripture with reference to an object placed before us, and our correspondence to that object. When God said to Abraham, “I am El Shaddai”—the all sufficient God, “be thou perfect.” It is as if He had said, “Leave all to me.” As long as he did not leave all to Him, he was not perfect. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. v. 48). Do as your Father in heaven does. In Hebrews, it is perfection as regards the conscience, like as if you look in a good looking glass you get a true representation of yourself. Here saints are seen in a race-course. “Let us therefore as many as are perfect be thus minded.” Let everything go that would interfere with your running; do not hesitate; let the eye be single. Saints in this condition, with Christ as their one object, the Word of God as their one guide, will not be long in seeing eye to eye. “God will reveal even this unto you.” “The meek will He teach His way.” The single eye makes the body full of light. Double motives and diverse objects divide and scatter saints: Christ and the Word draw and keep them together.

Verse 17.—“Brethren, be followers together of me.”

How blessed when a servant of God feels so assured that he is in the path marked out in the Word of God, that he can exhort and encourage others to walk in identification with him. To be ensamples to the flock, so that younger ones coming on behind may imitate us (1 Thess. i. 6). How needful to follow Christ fully (1 Cor. xi. 1) so that we do not cause others to err or stumble by our evil example.

Verse 19.—“For many walk.” Even among those who professed Christ’s Name. Their worldly ways made the apostle weep : they were a dishonour to that worthy Name. What rivers of tears he would shed if he were here now, over the ways of many who call Jesus their Saviour, but live like the world. “Who mind earthly things”; nothing that the world would esteem wrong, no glaring sins, but the mind set on “things below.” They were not delivered from the love of this present world. The words that follow are often applied to gluttons and drunkards, but they take in a much larger circle. All who “mind earthly things,” “are enemies of the Cross of Christ.” They may name His Name, and call themselves His, but they shew by what they love and what their minds are set upon, that they are of the earth. The lover of the world is “the enemy of God” (James iv. 4). The true Christian has been delivered from it (Gal. i. 3), crucified to it (Gal. vi. 14), and lifted out of it to become a stranger and a pilgrim here. He wants no more of it than his Lord and Master had, but passes

on to his own country, his own inheritance, and home in heaven. "Whose end is destruction": solemn words. May worldly-minded professors weigh them, and allow themselves to be searched by them.

Verse 20.—"For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven." We belong to another country: our home, inheritance, portion and riches are all there. Grasp as much as ever you can of that, think of it, set your mind upon it and say "It's mine." How wonderful that God should have taken us clean out from the present world, severed us from all that was once our boast down here, and given us a place and portion up there. This is God's way of lifting up the hearts of His people heavenward. He has made them citizens, freemen up there, and there is their inheritance reserved and their home. Well may we sing—

"Heaven is my Fatherland,
Heaven is my Home."

"We look for the Saviour." Already He has come from heaven and by His work upon the Cross He bought us altogether, body and soul. Already we are saved—free from condemnation, and made meet for glory. But His work is not done yet. "We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus." The same Saviour who in His death delivered us, Who in His risen life has been delivering and saving us all along from the sins and dangers of the way, will come again to emancipate

us from the present world, and from bodies which are still subject to disease and death, in which the flesh still abides. He will come as “Saviour” to complete the work He began, to put the last grand touch of redemption to our bodies, fitting us at once and for ever to be in His immediate presence.

Verse 21.—“Who shall change the body of our humiliation.” Our bodies are the Lord’s even now, and are very dear to Him. The hairs of our head are all numbered. The dust of His saints who have fallen asleep, is precious in His sight. Not a whit will be forgotten—all belongs to Christ, and He will claim it. But meanwhile, we are left here part of a groaning creation, to learn how far down sin has dragged us. Our ransomed spirits would soar away, but the body like a chain drags us downward. We groan for the full deliverance. The Spirit within makes us sigh for the release. “We look for the Saviour.” What a moment that will be when He comes. The sleeping saints will be raised, the living changed. “Who shall change the body of our humiliation.” “Change” denotes an external work : “Fashion” an internal work. “Fashioned like to the body of His glory.” Everything will be according to Christ then. The glory will go right through us, transforming us in a moment. There are millions of His beloved ones’ bodies just now the prey of worms, as if He did not care for them. But the moment will come when He will redeem them from the

power of the grave. Is He able to do this? Yes, He has power, and because He has the power, and will put it forth, He will change and fashion the bodies of His saints, making them radiant with His glory.

Chapter XX.

“**T**HEREFORE my brethren.” This verse properly closes chapter iii. It is the practical lesson that the Holy Ghost draws from the fact that we are looking for the Lord Jesus to come from heaven. Are you expecting such a Saviour? Do you live in the hope of being in His presence any moment, all together? “Therefore—stand fast in the Lord.” Do not give up your confidence, or slacken in your obedience. “Stand fast *in the Lord*,” He owns you, controls you: let His will alone be your law. “In the Lord,” implies subjection to His will, obedience to His Word. “My brethren:” there is force in that word. All have one Father, one nature, one standing: all are loved with the same love, and ought to love one another. There is no superiority, no lording it over one another. As a true shepherd He longs for them, and looks onward to the day of the judgment seat, where they shall be His “joy and crown.” Subjection to the Lord now, and the “Well done” of that day go together. When He comes, He will own all that has been done in obedience to Him. Therefore “Stand fast;” have a little patience, and go on

steadily in the path of pleasing Him. Do not be depressed or cast down, if you find some difficulty, some opposition, but let your hearts be full of the bright and blessed hope of His coming.

Verse 2.—“I beseech Euodias, and I beseech Syntyche.” In the midst of so much to cheer the Apostle among his beloved Philippians, there seems to have been one jarring note, which he does not pass by, one little heartburning which he seeks to remove, for well he knew how great a matter that little spark might kindle. “That they be of the same mind *in the Lord*.” There may be diversity without division, individuality without departure from the ways of the Lord. He does not make us all exactly alike, not all diamonds, or emeralds or sapphires. But although “many members,” yet there is only “one body:” many ministries, only one Lord. There is no room for self-will and self-choosing, you taking your way, I taking mine. The word is “of one mind” as in chap. ii. 2, and here “of one mind in the Lord.” Individual subjection to Him and to His Word, will keep saints from differing and being divided.

Verse 3.—“I entreat thee also true yokefellow.” This refers to Epaphroditus (chap. ii. 25) who was to help them to be of one mind. How few are able to do such delicate work! It needs much love, grace, wisdom, tenderness. The mention of these two women evidently brought to the Apostle’s mind “other women” who had laboured with him in the Gospel. He does not say they

preached : they "laboured." How much may be done if only there is the heart for it, without going beyond the woman's sphere as marked out in Scripture. And how great the need for such labourers. Many seem to think now-a-days that one man should do everything, and all the rest be 'silent and inactive. But this is not the Lord's way. He gives to every member of the body a place and a work, and it is our responsibility to find out what our work is, and then do it as unto the Lord. All can help by earnest prayer, especially for those who are in the thick of the fight.

"Whose names are in the book of life." What a motive for service to the Lord, and for loving our fellow-servants, and keeping us humble. When the seventy returned telling of the devils being subject through Christ's Name, He told them to rather rejoice that their names were written in heaven (Luke x. 17-20). Paul has several allusions to Luke's Gospel in his Epistles, and doubtless this is one of them, for he adds "Rejoice in the Lord." When he reminded Epaphroditus and the saints at Philippi that their names were in "the book of life," he would have in his mind those memorable words of the Lord Jesus. Ah, there would be no time for these little quarrels, these bickerings and estrangements among fellow-saints and fellow-servants, if we only remembered that our names are in the book of life, that all are dear to Christ and sure to be in the same heaven. These precious little reminders by the Lord Jesus in

Luke x., and by the Holy Ghost here, are intended to make us rejoice and sing.—

“Now I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies.”

It implies also that one sure evidence of our names being written in heaven is, that we love and own His Name here. He will not fail to own our names up there ; let us cling to His peerless Name down here in the scene where He was cast out, and where His Name is still disowned among men.

Verse 5.—“Let your moderation be known unto all men.” “Moderation,” means—yieldingness or gentleness. It means you should not stand up for your rights, but be willing to surrender rather than quarrel. Of course this refers to what belongs to ourselves, not to the truth of God. We ought never to surrender it, or yield to those who would deprive us of it, anything that concerns the glory of God. But some may say, “If I yield, and not stand up for my rights, I shall be a loser.” Very likely. But then see what follows—“The Lord is at hand :” What a beautiful word : This may be taken in two ways : First—That the Lord is near, and He will take care of you : Second—He is coming, and what will it matter though you be a loser. Five minutes with the Lord will recompense for all you have lost by yielding, or showing the gentleness of Christ down here. How these great eternal truths come down

and enter into the details of our everyday lives ! What an intensely practical thing it makes life to be, to see that it is to be moulded and fashioned by the fact that the Lord is near, close at hand, to look after His people's interests, and not to allow a hair of their heads to perish unless it be His good pleasure. And then to think that He may come at any moment and call us home. Oh ! what lives ours would be if we allowed these truths to have their power over us.

Verse 6.—“Be careful for nothing.” In one sense we must have cares, and these He tells us to cast upon Him. “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you (1 Peter v. 7): but He would not have us burdened with anxious cares, so as to weigh us down and come in between us and God. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples—“Take no thought for the morrow” (Matt. vi. 34). Do not allow cares and anxieties about what may never come, clog and hinder you in your service for the Lord, or in your soul's communion with Him. In 1 Cor. vii. 35, the Apostle says “Attend upon the Lord without distraction.” It means that we are not to allow the soul to be distracted, or the mind perturbed by lawful things, so as to cloud or break our communion with God. How often a very little thing is used by the devil to upset and disturb the soul's enjoyment of God. What is the cure? “In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” How good of the

Lord to bid us bring our cares unto Him. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee" (Ps. lv. 22)—not only *it*, but "thee." What a gracious God we have, to so interest Himself in us, and in all that concerns us. Surely we ought never to have a care or a burden that we are afraid to cast upon Him, when He so freely invites us. And notice, it is "in everything," not the big things that we know we can do nothing with ourselves, but the little things as well. Nothing is too trifling for Him to take notice of, nothing ought to be too insignificant to carry to the Lord in prayer. Some one has said "Earthly care is a heavenly discipline," and the more frank and free you are in telling it all out to God your Father, the more will you find relief. When kneeling before the Lord in prayer, it is best to unburden the spirit, by telling Him all our cares and troubles first. It is of no use to try to be peaceful and in a spiritual frame of mind, if cares and troubles are pressing us down. Tell them all to the Lord freely, and the more you enter into the details of them the better. There are things you can tell to God, you could not to anyone else, and He delights to hear you. "In everything"—nothing is too insignificant. How often He has heard your cry and interposed on your behalf. As John tells us "If we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John v. 15). There it is prayer bringing down the answers directly from heaven; here it is telling God the

whole matter and then leaving it with Him : casting the care and burden upon Him and leaving it there. Have you not sometimes come away carrying it, instead of leaving it with God ? There is no promise here of immediate interposition, or a manifest deliverance, but the word that follows is, “And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds.” “The peace of God :” What a beautiful word ! Do you think God in His high and holy heaven is perturbed or annoyed about these little cares and vexatious things ? No, not a bit. Then the very same peace that He has is to be yours. You have told Him all your care, all that presses upon your heart, now leave it to Him. Trust Him with it, and know that if it be for your good He will deliver you, calmly resting in the assurance that all power is His, and that whatsoever is best that He will do. Then “the peace of God shall guard—keep as a garrison—(for the same word see 2 Cor. xi. 32) your hearts and minds through” or “in Christ Jesus.” And take care not to forget “with thanksgiving.” How often God has given deliverance and eased us of the burden. Have we always thanked Him ? Not only are we told to “Pray without ceasing,” but this is immediately followed by, “In everything give thanks ” (1 Thess. v. 17, 18), “Giving thanks always for all things ” (Eph. v. 20).

Verse 8.—“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.*"

In the preceding verse we have God's peace guarding the heart and mind. Here we have what is to occupy them. "Think on these things." What a beautiful line of things for the mind to dwell upon. It must have some occupation, something to think about, and if we allow it to dwell on such things as are enumerated here it will be kept healthy. As a man "thinketh in his heart so is he" (Prov. xxiii. 7, 8). Some by nature have a morbid mind, some a wicked mind, some an immoral mind. The saints of God ought to have "pure minds" (2 Pet. iii. 1), and "pure hearts" (1 Pet. i. 22). None of us have these by nature. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. xvii. 9). "Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind (Eph. ii. 2). But the Gospel believed and received works a change." "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. i. 22). The love of God is poured into the heart of the saint (Rom. v. 5), and turns it to Himself and to what is according to Him. The mind purified and renewed (Rom. xii. 2) has new objects.

Here we have a large category of things that the Spirit of God gives us to think about—"think on these

things"—the honest things, the just things, the pure things, the lovely things, the things of good report. Dwell on these things, cultivate the mind to think on them, and look for them in others. It is natural and quite easy to see the faults of fellow-believers, but it will be in proportion to your spirituality and keenness of vision that you will see their graces and good points. Think of them as loved of the Father, and given by Him to Christ, as accepted and beautiful in His sight. And then remember that there are some lovely things, some things of good report in each of them, even as there are some unlovely things in yourself. This wonderfully helps us to see good in others, and to let our minds dwell on what is good and lovely.

Verse 9.—"Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me do." I wish we could all say that. Paul evidently had the assurance that much of his own life and path had been according to God, as well as his doctrine. He could write to Timothy "Thou hast fully known my *doctrine, manner of life*" (2 Tim. iii. 10). The "doctrine" and the "manner of life" were in unison : he practised what he taught, and could appeal to the saints and say "Those things which ye have *seen* in me do." "Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ (1 Cor. xi. 1). Our example speaks louder than our words, and when we can let others "see" as well as "hear," our testimony must have weight.

"And the God of peace shall be with you." What a beautiful title! "The God of peace." So fully does He want His people to be habituated to peace, that He gives it to them in successive stages. First: "Being justified by faith, we have peace *with* God" (Rom. v. 1). Second: "Make your requests known to God. And the *peace of God* shall guard your hearts and minds" (Phil. iv. 8). And here by *thinking* of these lovely and beautiful things, and by *doing* what God has taught us by precept and example, "*The God of peace* shall be with you." This name gives us one aspect of the character of God. He *has* many others: "The God of patience and consolation" (Rom. xv. 6). "The God of the hope" (v. 24). "The God of Glory" (1 Peter v. 10). We are warriors in the fight, but our hearts are to be surrounded with peace, and our companionship is to be with "the God of peace." What a calm, unperturbed condition ought ours to be even when foes are all around. To enjoy the companionship of "the God of peace," do what He says. Let it be your aim to render continuous, persistent obedience every day: fight to do it, and "the God of peace shall be with you." This was the principle of the life of the Lord Jesus. He could say "The Father hath not left me *alone*, for I *always* do those things which please Him (John viii. 20). And when He had, in obedience to His Father's will, gone down to death, even the death of the Cross," "the God of peace" (Heb. xiii. 20) entered and brought Him again from the dead.

Obedience on the part of the saint is the secret of communion (John xiv. 23). The expression "God of peace" occurs at the end of the Epistles, implying that if we attend to God's instructions and commands, we shall know and enjoy His presence with us thus. There is a beautiful word at the close of the Epistle to the Thessalonians—"Those who gain the victory"—"The Lord of peace Himself, give you peace always, by all means" (2 Thess. iii. 15). He delights to give with a large and bountiful hand. "Always," in every circumstance, no matter how disturbing in its nature : "by all means," as if He would over-rule everything to keep His people calm and unruffled, so that they may always be victorious, dwelling in the unclouded sunshine of His presence. It is remarkable how, if nineteen things go smoothly, and one gets ruffled, the devil can use that one thing to upset us. But it is just there that "the Lord of peace" comes in to "give peace." Let us ever be ready and willing to receive it from Him. In His own way, and by His chosen means.

Verse 10.—“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.” He who bids them “Rejoice in the Lord alway” (v. 4) is full of joy himself. Not surely in his outward circumstances, for he was a prisoner in a Roman prison. Nor is it here that Christ is preached, as in Chap. i. 18, but they had not forgotten him, as many others had who had been brought to the Lord through his ministry. It is a sign of heart-fellowship with the Lord, when we are showing

a real and practical care of His faithful servants. Coldness towards them is regarded by the Lord as being toward Him also (see Matthew xxv. 42, 45).

Verse 11.—“I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content.” He had not got into this condition in a moment. It was the result of long wilderness discipline and of acquaintance with the living God. The wilderness with its trials had not cast him down, or thrown him into a morbid state. He had learned God in a way he otherwise never could have, save in the midst of these trials. “I have learned,” is the language of a warring yet cheerful soul, glorifying God in the fires.

Verse 12.—“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound,” etc. What a variety of experiences we have here: The ups and downs of real wilderness life. It is truly blessed to hear a man who had for Christ’s sake suffered the loss of all earthly things, telling in such a cheerful and triumphant strain how contented he is with his lot, and how his soul had learned the secret not only of submission to, but of joyful acquiescence in the will of God. It shews he was much in communion with God about, all these things, and this alone is what gives a happy and contented mind.

Verse 13.—“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” This was the secret of it all. “Not I, but Christ.” Jesus says, “Without me ye can do nothing” (John xv. 5). Here we have the converse side—“I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me.”

People sometimes say, "We are such poor things we can do nothing." This may sound very humble, but it is not Christianity. Paul's Christ is ours, and His strength avails for us as it did for him. He never sends any a warfare at their own charges. If he calls you to pursue a certain path, or to do a certain work for Him, He will give you strength for both. His commands are all enabling. This triumphant note in closing the Epistle to the Philippians, contrasts with the closing words of the Thessalonian Epistles. There it is the coming of the Lord ; here it is the work, the warfare, and the triumphs and trials and difficulties. He is in full harness, still pressing on in the fight, singing as He advances, because he knows God is with him, and Christ's strength is sufficient for him.

Verses 14, 15.—"Notwithstanding, ye have done well," etc. He does not undervalue the love and care of fellow-believers even though his faith in God is unwavering. In one way he was independent of all, because he was dependent on God, yet God uses His people who are in fellowship with Him to carry out His purposes, and the Apostle says—"Ye have done well." It reminds us of that beautiful word of the Lord concerning the woman—"She hath done what she could" (Mark xiv. 8). "The beginning of the Gospel," refers to the time when it first was preached among the Gentiles. These were times of persecution. We are as near to the end as Paul was to the beginning. Then it was

surrounded by open ungodliness and opposition, now with empty profession, varnished ungodliness, and secret hatred to God and His truth. How this should cause God's people to be on their guard, and not be misled by outward appearances which so often deceive.

Verses 16-18.—“I desire fruit that may abound to your account,” etc. He looks at their gift in the light of the judgment seat. Do we reckon in this way when we give? If we withhold what we might and could give, it will diminish our reward in that day. All that is given with a single eye to His glory shall have its recompence then. But what is done to be seen of men will have none (Matt. iv. 4, 5).

“Having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well-pleasing unto God.” The allusion is to the burnt-offering which went up from the altar as a sweet savour unto Jehovah (Lev. i. 9). Then we read in Eph. v. 1—“Christ also hath loved us and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.” The same word is used of the little offering of the Philippians, and of the infinite sacrifice of Christ. The one ascended up to heaven perfumed with the fragrance of the other. We do not know of what it consisted, but whatever it was, God accepted it as a sweet savour offering. It had evidently cost them something, and it was sent to Paul constrained by the love of Christ, hence its value in the estimation of God. If our gifts

and offerings cost us nothing, they are worth nothing in God's sight. If we only give out of our abundance, and what we can easily spare, whether of money, time, etc., it is of little account in the reckoning of heaven, but when we give what we can ill spare, and when we feel the shoe pinches as we do it, that alone is a sacrifice. And when it is given to God from a pure motive, it goes up to Him as a sweet savour perfumed by the sacrifice of Christ. It is as it were a reminder to Him of that one great and costly sacrifice which Christ offered when He gave Himself. Thus we see how close we may follow in His steps, and how God delights to receive from His people that which they offer in His peerless Name.

Verse 19.—“But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” What a promise. The very arrangement of the words is precious. Our need and His riches are strung together, looped as if by two bands. Then see the beginning and end of the verse—“My God”—“Christ Jesus.” Just think of that word—“*My* God.” Paul was in prison, yet he knew God as his God. The very trials he was passing through made him prove, and enjoy God in a way he could not have otherwise done. He was not a novice in the knowledge of God. He knew Him well, and had known Him long. “Peace *with* God” he had known for long: “the peace *of* God” was also his portion, and he knew the presence of “the God of peace” as consciously with Him. From that height

of enjoyment of God he says to others—"My God." There is a personality about it too, as if He would have each one of His people thus appropriate Him. He loves to be so used. To give is His delight. The sun in the heavens is ever pouring out its fulness of warmth and light, and yet it is not exhausted. So God is ever giving: it is His very nature to give. He says "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and He takes the more blessed peace as a bountiful giver. "Shall supply *all* your need." He does not say all your *known* need, for we do not know half of our need. Nor does He say all that you want, for we often desire things that are not good for us, and He withholds them from us! but "all your need" as He knows it and sees it.

"According to His riches in glory," He looks at *our* need, but supplies it according to *His* riches. If you have a little need, He will put a great deal in. It seems to say—if you need six pounds, He will give you twenty. He gives in superabounding measure, and always in the very nick of time. "*His* riches in glory." That is according to what *He* is, not according to what we need or deserve. By way of contrast to God's way of giving, we read that when Paul and his companions left the island of Melita, the natives showed them kindness, and when they departed they loaded them with "such things as were necessary" or "as they needed" (Acts xxviii. 10). They acted humanely and kindly, according to man's way, but when God opens out His storehouse,

He does it “according to His riches in glory.” Another thing He will do is to strengthen us “according to the riches of His glory.” Paul prays in Eph. iii. 14-16—“That He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.” Glory and power are constantly conjoined in Scripture, and that He is able to do it verse 20 fully shows. “By Christ Jesus.” It is *in* Him and through Him that all God’s riches descend to us, and He gives in no other way. All God’s blessings come through Him, temporal and spiritual. But for Christ, we would have been with the man who cried, “Send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am *tormented*” (Luke xvi. 24). Do you like to be indebted to God for *everything*? Do you enjoy all that you possess as coming to you “by Christ Jesus.” “Christ Jesus,” means Christ in resurrection. He not only earned it all for you by His death, but in resurrection He lives as the great Administrator. The tiniest gift or mercy comes direct from that Christ in glory, God’s agent, in whom all His fulness dwells for the filling of His wilderness people. Notice then the four chief points in this beautiful verse—three pronouns and one preposition: “*My* God”—“*your* need”—“*His* riches”—“*by* Christ Jesus.”

“Why should I ever careful be,
Since such a God is mine ;
He watches o’er me night and day,
And tells me ‘Mine is thine.’ ”

Verses 21-23.—“Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.” All are dear to Him, and should be to us. It is Christ-like to care for, and to be interested in one another, to pray for and help our fellow-saints who are one with us in Christ, and with whom we are to spend a long eternity.

This epistle is a needed balance to Ephesians, where the saints are seen “*in* Christ Jesus”: here Christ is seen *in* His saints.” Let this mind be *in* you which was also *in* Christ Jesus.” “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” This beautiful Epistle is like a bracing sea-breeze to the people of God, full of strength and encouragement, bracing us up to go onward in the fight and forward in the race, ever victorious and always triumphant through Christ Jesus.

SUMMARY OF THE EPISTLE.

N Philippians, God has placed a glorious object before the saint, and enjoined a godly carelessness about all else, so that that object may be won.

Sin is not mentioned in the Epistle. Joy and rejoicing are mentioned sixteen times. To be faithful is to be joyful. Devoted Christians who follow the Lord fully, are a rejoicing people.

Philippians shews us how we are to apprehend that for which we are apprehended by Christ Jesus. It views the believer as pressing on towards the mark for “the prize of God’s calling up on high,” through God working in us day by day.

“*Salvation*” in this Epistle is regarded as already ours, “your own salvation.” Yet we are said to be working it out and looking for the Saviour. For salvation in Philippians is looked at as the result of the race, and includes the complete deliverance which shall be ours at the coming of the Saviour.

“*Fellowship*” is largely spoken of also in this Epistle, and in varied forms—see Chapters i. 5; ii. 1; iii. 10; iv. 14 (R.V.).

"*All things*," in Chapters iii. 8 ; iii. 21 ; iv. 12, 13, 18 (R.V.), beautifully set forth the loss and the gain of being out and out for Christ.

The theme throughout is Christ ; Divine principles centered in the Person of Christ ; Christ in the believer, and Christ before the believer as His example and his goal. Here also we have the believer's daily progress, conflict and victory. The secret springs of His strength, to do and to suffer for Christ.

Chapter I. Christ the LIFE. The Gospel mind in the saint, with Christ as his object for life and service.

Chapter II. Christ the PATTERN. The humble mind in the saint, with Christ on earth as his example in obedience and character.

Chapter III. Christ the OBJECT. The earnest mind in the saint, with Christ in glory as his goal.

Christ the STRENGTH. The peaceful mind in the believer, with Christ for his need and care.

Chapter i. 6, is an epitome of this entire Epistle.

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