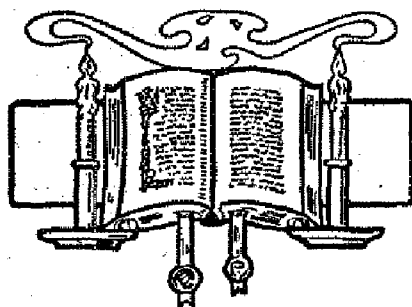


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## BRIEF BIBLE STUDIES

# Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philippians

BY J. W. H. NICHOLS



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## BRIEF BIBLE STUDIES

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### PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

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Ephesians gives us the Church in Christ.

Colossians—Christ in the Church.

The three epistles to the Romans, Ephesians and Colossians are especially allied in their teaching, for while Romans and Ephesians cover the whole scope of Christian truth, the epistle to the Colossians seems a connecting link between the two.

We will, therefore, commence our study by a brief comparison of the three epistles.

ROMANS views man as alive in his sins and under the condemnation of a righteous God, then forgiven, justified from that state—in virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ.

EPHESIANS speaks of man as "dead in trespasses and sins," then—by the operation of God—the believer has been quickened and brought into new creation blessing.

COLOSSIANS gives both states, chapter 3: 7, "When ye lived in them," corresponding with Romans; and chapter 2: 13, "You being dead in

your sins," which links with Ephesians. It therefore takes up both sides and results.

In Romans the believer is looked at as justified, having the life of Christ risen, and walking in responsibility in the world, rejoicing in hope of coming glory.

Colossians views the believer as risen with Christ, seeking those things which are above, where a hope is laid up, but not yet seated in heavenly places.

The Colossians were directly in danger of being brought under the influence of philosophy and Judaism, and as to the former, it is said that at that time heathen philosophers claimed to have found what was called the "*Pleroma*." This is an untranslatable word. By it they claimed to know something that filled up all human deficiency—plenitude of knowledge and power. Paul, in writing to them, took up the word in connection with Christ, claiming that the true "*Pleroma*" was in Him. In our version the word is given as fulness and completeness.

In this epistle we have more of "Headship" than in Ephesians. Their special danger was, "Not holding the Head," and to re-establish them in this truth the Apostle wrote this epistle, which presents the "*Pleroma*," or fulness of the Head. Ephesians speaks of the Church as "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

Both Ephesians and Colossians commence nearly alike, written from Rome while the Apostle was in bonds, about the same time, and sent by the same brother.

## CHAPTER ONE

"Paul, apostle of Christ Jesus, by God's will, and Timotheus the brother, to the holy and faithful brethren in Christ which are in Colosse. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Christ.

"We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ continually when praying for you, having heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and the love which ye have towards all the saints, on account of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens; of which ye heard before in the word of the truth of the glad tidings, which are come to you, as they are in all the world, and are bearing fruit and growing, even as also among you, from the day ye heard them and knew indeed the grace of God in truth: even as ye learned from Epaphras our beloved fellow-bondman, who is a faithful minister of Christ for you, who has also manifested to us your love in the Spirit.

"For this reason we also, from the day we heard of your faith and love, do not cease praying and asking for you, to the end that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so as to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the true knowledge of God; strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love: in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; who is image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation; because by Him were created all things, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or authorities; all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all, and all things subsist together by Him. And He is the Head of the body, the assembly; who is the

beginning, firstborn from among the dead, that He might have the first place in all things: for in Him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of His cross—by Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now has it reconciled in the body of His flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and irreproachable before it, if indeed ye abide in the faith founded and firm, and not moved away from the hope of the glad tidings, which ye have heard, which have been proclaimed in the whole creation which is under heaven, of which I Paul became minister.

"Now, I rejoice in sufferings for you, and I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for His body, which is the assembly; of which I became minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given me towards you to complete the word of God, the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to His saints; to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you the hope of glory: whom we announce, admonishing every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, to the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ. Whereunto also I toil, combating according to His working, which works in me in power."

Ver. 1. As in Ephesians 1:1 and Romans 1:5, Paul had been called of God to communicate His truth, and this gave authority to his words.

Ver. 2. Here the address is to "saints and faithful brethren"—they were walking in brotherly fellowship; while in Ephesians "brethren" is left out, placing them, it would appear, more directly before God.

Ver. 3. We do not begin here, as in Ephesians, with heavenly blessings and privileges, but there

is a long preface of thanksgiving for the way the gospel had reached them and the fruit it had borne, with a desire expressed that their hearts and hopes might be upon heavenly things.

Vers. 4, 5. We have, in these verses, the three Christian characteristics in evidence, "faith, hope and love." See 1 Cor. 13:13 and 1 Thess. 1:3; compare also Heb. 10:22-24, where the following exhortations are given:

"Let us draw near in the full assurance of faith."

"Let us hold fast the profession of our hope."  
(*New Trans.*)

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love."

"Christ in you the hope of glory." There is nothing here of the heavenly calling and inheritance; the gospel preached everywhere gave a hope of heavenly things and produced fruit in those who received it. Epaphras (ver. 7) had borne witness to their godly sincerity.

Ver. 8 gives us the only mention of the Spirit in the epistle. This accords with the characteristic presentation of the truth. Here Christ is the believer's life, "Christ in you," as in contrast to Ephesians: "You in Christ."

Ver. 9. For this cause he prayed for them. Love in activity on their side encouraged him to do so, for love is the spiritual atmosphere in which we grow. (See Eph. 3:17, 18.)

It is noticeable that in the epistles, where saints were going on happily, as in Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, the

Apostle's prayers for them are recorded; while in Corinthians, Galatians, and Hebrews, we find nothing of this—though we are sure he agonized before God for them—but he is not at liberty to pray in the same strain.

In this prayer we have not—as in Ephesians 1—the counsels and purposes of God; it is more state than standing; therefore, desires are expressed that their walk might be in accord with their heavenly hope. The full knowledge of the will of God is the first thing for which he prayed—this is the foundation principle. For this full knowledge of His will we need wisdom and spiritual understanding. No amount of human intelligence can make up for the lack of this. We may get help from a more spiritually-minded person, but it is evident God has linked this knowledge of His will, His path, with our state of soul, and where this is entered into, there is stability of walk. There is nothing mystical about this; the Word (compare John 17 : 17-19) is that which forms the mind and is the means to this end.

Ver. 10. Note, it is walking worthy of the Lord here, not of the calling, as in Eph. 4 : 1. The believer knows what becomes *Him*, and his delight is to be well-pleasing in all things, "growing by the true knowledge of God" (*New Trans.*).

Ver. 11. "Strengthened," not as in Ephesians, by the Spirit in the inner man, but "by His glorious power." The knowledge of the glory in which the Lord Jesus is has become the power to lead us through the sufferings and testings of the wilderness in triumph.

For those three things the Apostle prayed, and vers. 12, 13, 14 speak of three things for which he gave thanks: (1) They were made meet to be partakers of the inheritance—this is, in principle, similar to Eph. 1: 4, 5. The inheritance is in the light, and already the believer is fitted for the place. (2) Their deliverance from the power of darkness and transference into the kingdom of His dear Son. Those who once were dominated by the power of Satan have been forever delivered, and the power which thus has freed us has given an entirely new relationship—we are brought under the sway of the Son of God's love.

Ver. 14 gives us the third thing for which he gave thanks—"Redemption, even the forgiveness of sins." The righteous ground is the precious blood of Christ.

Colossians has its counterpart in the book of Deuteronomy. There Israel was redeemed and on the threshold of the promised land; all was certainty and victory, though the land was not in possession. In Ephesians, which corresponds with the book of Joshua, the people are seen in the land and called upon to take possession.

Now that the question of guilt and condition has been fully met, and our future blessing secured, we are able to enter a little into the varied glories and excellencies of the Person of Christ, who should attract and engage every heart.

Ver. 15. "Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation" (*New Trans.*). The invisible God has been fully made known in the Person of the Son. If this glorious Person

takes His place in creation, He must be Head of it, hence the expression, "Firstborn of all creation." It is not a question of *time*, but *position*. Another has beautifully put it, "He could have but one place, namely, that of supremacy, without contestation and controversy" (J. N. D.).

Ver. 16. He created all things, hence He must be supreme. It was in His person the Godhead acted when all things were created, not only earthly but heavenly; moreover, all things were created for Him, and as in the purposes of God (see Ps. 8 and Heb. 2) all was to be subjected to man, He who became Man takes dominion by right, hence the expression, "for Him."

Ver. 17. "All things subsist together by Him" (*New Trans.*). Not only is He Creator, He is the Sustainer too (see Heb. 1:3). Everything is held together by Him.

Ver. 18. Here is another headship, another supremacy and glory. As Man and by resurrection, He has acquired an accessory glory and headship. He is Head of the Body, the Church, the Beginning, the First-born from among the dead, hence universal supremacy is His.

Ver. 19. Note the *New Trans.*: "In Him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell." This is very beautiful. All was found in that blessed Man, and this seems to be an answer to what was before referred to, *viz.*, the presumptive claim of Gnostics to have found the "*Pleroma*," or, literally, the fulness. Paul says the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him. The Father was revealed in the Son, and all His mighty works

were done by the Spirit. The fulness of the Godhead was manifested in Christ.

Ver. 20. Here we have another glory. When creation had fallen and the heavens had been defiled by the presence of the adversary there, He undertook and completed the work of reconciliation. Mark the difference in the *New Trans.*, "By Him to reconcile all things unto itself." Peace has been made, and the ground thus laid upon which finally everything will be reconciled (put into proper relationship) to God. This will be fully reached in the eternal state. (See Rev. 21: 1 to 8.)\*

Ver. 21. But believers are already reconciled. Through the efficacy of His death, we who were enemies and alienated are in blessed holy relation with God. How wonderful the work and how great the Person that can present us before God without reproach, "holy and unblameable."

Ver. 23. "If ye abide in the faith;" here would be the proof of having received the reconciliation. There are no "ifs" when we are viewed as in Christ (see Ephesians), but where we are viewed as in the wilderness and on our way to glory, warnings are needed and given. Not that a true believer could fail to reach home, but addressing a company on the ground of responsibility, there may be some who are mere professors. The test is—abiding in faith.

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\* Here, we do well to recognize that infernal beings are not in question, the wicked remain eternally unreconciled, in their sins and outside this blessed scene of eternal joy, when heaven and earth will be for ever completely free from the power and presence of evil.

This precious Gospel ministry had gone far beyond the limits of Judaism, and the Apostle was the chosen vessel to make it known. With his ministry there is a fulness not found elsewhere.

We have then :

- (1) A double headship—Head over all creation, and Head of the Body.
- (2) A double reconciliation: all things to be reconciled and persons now reconciled.
- (3) A double ministry: of the gospel, and to the assembly.

Ver. 24. These unfoldings had particularly brought upon this wholehearted servant persecution and suffering, but he counted it a privilege, for in this he filled up what remained of the sufferings of Christ for them. This, of course, has no reference to the efficacy of His work, but the principle we can see in Moses, who suffered with, and for the people of God when they were oppressed.

Ver. 25. Of the mystery now revealed he became minister, and this precious truth completed the Word of God (an important word as to inspiration) ; nothing more remained to be revealed—the full cycle of truth had been given.

Vers. 26, 27. This wonderful secret had been treasured in the heart of God before worlds were, but now there was no longer a mystery. This Body—the assembly, united to Him who became Man, now glorified—and the bringing in of Gentiles was entirely outside all that hitherto had been made known.

Ver. 28. It was this wondrous Person whom

Paul preached, and his desire was that those who believed the testimony should grow up to full Christian stature, transformed by occupancy with Christ into His moral likeness.

Ver. 29. For this he labored, but it was the power of Christ working in and through him, and not human effort.

## CHAPTER TWO

"For I would have you know what combat I have for you, and those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in flesh; to the end that their hearts may be encouraged, being united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. And I say this to the end that no one may delude you by persuasive speech. For if indeed in the flesh I am absent, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order, and the firmness of your faith in Christ. As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him, and assured in the faith, even as ye have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. See that there be no one who shall lead you away as a prey through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the teaching of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and authority, in whom also ye have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ; buried with Him in baptism, in which ye have been also raised with Him through faith of the working of God who raised Him from among the dead. And you, being dead in offences and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has quickened together with Him, having forgiven us all the offences; having effaced the handwriting in ordinances which stood out against us, which

was contrary to us, He has taken it also out of the way, having nailed it to the cross; having spoiled principalities and authorities, He made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it.

"Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in matter of feast, or new moon, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no one fraudulently deprive you of your prize, doing his own will in humility and worship of angels, entering into things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by the mind of his flesh, and not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God.

"If ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world, why as if alive in the world do ye subject yourselves to ordinances? Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch (things which are all for destruction in the using of them): according to the injunctions and teachings of men (which have indeed an appearance of wisdom in voluntary worship, and humility, and harsh treatment of the body, not in a certain honor), to the satisfaction of the flesh."

Ver. 1. Here the Apostle would encourage the saints by telling them of the constant exercise of soul he had both for them and those of Laodicea, not having seen them face to face, but feeling a special interest and responsibility, as Apostle to the Gentiles and minister of the special truth already referred to.

Ver. 2. He desires their encouragement, so that, their hearts being knit together in love, they might enter into the riches of full assurance of understanding, the full knowledge of the mystery of God. Leave out, "And of the Father and of Christ," as these words do not appear in the older manuscripts.

Ver. 3. "In which (not 'In whom') are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." In the mystery wisdom and knowledge centered, so that in realizing this, the pretensions of Science would have no place. The failure to understand the heavenly calling of the Church and the relation of Christ to it as Head of the Body, has led to the corruption seen in the professing Church of to-day. Christendom has been leavened by those principles which were at work in the Apostle's day, *viz.*: Philosophy and Judaism.

Ver. 4. Well did the Apostle know the value of the realization of this truth, which would safeguard them from the subtle attacks of Satan to which these new converts were exposed.

Ver. 5. As order and firmness in the faith characterized them, this gave confidence to the Apostle, so that he seeks to safeguard them against what might beguile them.

Vers. 6, 7. Having received the Lord, all else is but an increase of knowledge. He exhorts, "Walk in Him," being "rooted and built up in Him." This would steady them in the Christian pathway and guard them against what was false, leading out the heart to praise and give thanks.

Ver. 8. Here was their snare—and ours. The natural man revels in speculation. Philosophy is as old as the world, but has never delivered man from the misery and sorrow occasioned by the presence of sin: all is empty and calculated to deceive. Human traditions, too, are but the product of man's wisdom, and all is foolishness with God. These things are not according to Christ,

the One in whom God is made known, and He is the delight of the Father's heart.

Vers. 9, 10. What a contrast to the misty, vain speculations of philosophy! The fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Him, and we are complete in Him. Wondrous thought — filled full (alternative reading), so that nothing is needed outside Christ. In chapter 1 we have seen His double Headship, here it is referred to in connection with our association with Him.

Vers. 11 to 17. Here we touch another truth. We have professedly died out of that condition to which philosophy and Judaism attach. Circumcision was but a sign of separation: this had its antitype in the believer's identification with the death of Christ. This was outwardly evidenced by baptism—"buried with Him"—so that it is our privilege to count ourselves to have been as completely put out of the way as a dead man is when buried. We are also risen (here read "in whom," not "in which"), for He not only died but rose again. The only way it can be said that baptism is connected with resurrection is in coming out of the water. He rose, leaving behind forever all our offences and condemnation, and in that resurrection the believer sees his complete clearance. The handwriting of ordinances which applied to man in the flesh, and which the Jews found an intolerable burden, was blotted out. The handwriting here doubtless means the signature—so to speak—of the Jews to the law. The *New Trans.* reads, "having effaced the handwriting in ordinances." The might also of evil powers—

spiritual wickedness—has been crushed, and in resurrection Christ triumphed over them, leading (as we are told in Ephesians) captivity captive.

Vers. 18 to 25. Consequently, as risen with Christ, though still on earth, they were beyond ordinances and shadows. By putting angels as objects of worship between the soul and Christ they would separate themselves from the Head, from whom the whole Body draws its sustenance, increasing with the increase of God. If we have died with Christ from the elements of the world, why then subject ourselves to ordinances?—which of course, can only apply to this life.

It may appear pious (and this is what the flesh values), but it is connected with a pride that would intrude itself and displace Christ, the Head of the Body.

### CHAPTER THREE

"If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God. When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory.

"Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, vile passions, evil lust, and unbridled desire, which is idolatry. On account of which things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. In which ye also once walked when ye lived in these things. But now, put off, ye also, all these things, wrath, anger, malice, blasphemy, vile language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new, renewed into full knowledge according to the image of Him that has

created Him; wherein there is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is everything, and in all.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any should have a complaint against any; even as the Christ has forgiven you, so also do ye. And to all these add love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body, and be thankful.

"Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God. And everything, whatever ye may do in word or in deed, do all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father by Him.

"Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord. Fathers, do not vex your children, to the end that they be not disheartened. Bondmen, obey in all things your masters according to flesh; not with eye services, as men-pleasers, but in simplicity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatsoever ye do, labor at it heartily, as doing it to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance; ye serve the Lord Christ. For he that does a wrong shall receive the wrong he has done, and there is no respect of persons."

Vers. 1,2. We have previously seen that this epistle views the believer as risen with Christ, but not—as in Ephesians—seated in heavenly places. The "if" does not imply doubt, but is an exhortation flowing from the truth already insisted upon. "Things above." Heavenly things should be our pursuit, for Christ, in whom we

have been raised, is seated at the right hand of God. Our mind should be on these things, not on the earth, to which we do not belong.

Vers. 3. The *New Trans.* reads: "For ye have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." That is the believer's position. Death, death with Christ, has severed every link which bound the believer to earth, and delivered him from the power of the enemy and that through which he works, the flesh's lusts. The believer lives, but his life is hidden safely in One who is its blessed source.

Vers. 4. Our position has not yet been manifested, but soon, before every created intelligence, we shall be manifested with Him, in glory. This should be an incentive to seek heavenly things.

Vers. 5, 6. Though the believer is heavenly in origin and destiny, his members—his body—are still on earth, and he is exposed to all the allurements of the world and Satan. The true "I," the new man, loves the good, and repudiates the flesh with all its desires, thus putting to death, or mortifying, the members of the old man. Practising these things brought down retribution upon the children of disobedience: how impossible then to allow the thought of indulgence in these lusts!

Ver. 7. These things characterized the Colossians *once*, but must do so no more: then it is not merely a question of denying unbridled lust, but the whole working of the natural will, which must lead to sin.

Ver. 8. Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, are the products of an unbroken will, the working of

the natural heart, never subdued by the power of God's grace. These things, therefore, must be put off.

Ver. 9. The old man with his deeds having been put off, accounted dead, truth holds sway in the heart. The new man delights in God and, walking in the light, judges everything unsuited to it. The new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created him. He has the knowledge of the nature of God Himself, has a divine standard of good and evil. This puts truth and falsehood in their relative positions, and explains the reason for the exhortation.

Many have been puzzled by the apparent sanction given in Old Testament times to lying. We must remember that, even when born anew, saints in that dispensation did not distinguish between the old man and the new, though, of course, conscience was there, and in some ways the tastes of the new man also: but "truth" had not come to light, and the evil of lying had not at all the same meaning as with Christians. The Apostle's argument is that death has brought to an end the old man and his deeds. The believers are to walk in the power of that and the reality of risen life.

Vers. 12, 13. He not only exhorts them—and us—to put off the old man, but to put on what is characteristic of the new—really the character of Christ, their life. They are to do so in the sense of the wondrous place the favor of God had set them in—"elect of God, holy and beloved." Read in conjunction with these verses, 1 Cor. 13,

where we find the subjective characteristics of charity—love.

The measure of forgiveness to one another is to be the measure of Christ's forgiveness to us.

Ver. 14. To all, add love, which is the bond of perfectness. This gives character to all those traits spoken of, and saves us from mistaking that which is merely *of nature* for the blessed fruit of *divine operation*. It is a holy love, which acts in the sense of communion with God.

Ver. 15. "Let the peace of Christ (*New Trans.*) preside in your hearts, to which ye also have been called, in one Body, and be ye thankful." Read in this connection John 14:27. "My peace," that which the Lord lived in, as a Man passing through a scene of opposition and turmoil. This, the world knows not, neither can it rob the believer of it while he walks in the fear of God. To this we have been called by the God of peace. Here the Body is brought in, not in connection with privileges, but in relation to conduct. Saints are to walk in the sense of that blessed unity of which peace is the crown. Thankfulness must result: the heart overflows in the enjoyment of divine love and heavenly peace.

Ver. 16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another; in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God." Note punctuation in J. N. D.'s *New Trans.* which explains this otherwise somewhat obscure verse. The word of Christ and the peace of Christ both are to govern and guard the believer. All is of

Him. His Word is the expression of His mind. See John 14:23.

It becomes the guiding principle of the life, and reveals to the soul all that belongs to that new life and new position in which the believer is set, supplying wisdom and direction according to God, so that believers are able to teach and admonish one another.

The heart makes melody, the harp is struck and the chords vibrate, sending forth sweetest music. The Person of Christ, known and enjoyed, is the theme of the believer's song.

Ver. 17. The consciousness of the soul's relationship with Christ pervades everything: whatever is done, is done in the name of the Lord Jesus. Whatever is done in that name—for His glory—bears the stamp of another world.

What a wonderful thought, that the little details of daily life can be performed in His name! What character this gives to our every action. Nothing then becomes irksome or unimportant. The life is lived with Him and to Him, and we give thanks to God our Father through Him.

Vers. 18-22. Every relationship of life is to be regulated by the truth and knowledge of Christ: all must bear the Christian character and glorify God in whatever relationship grace has placed them. How simple everything becomes where Christ is known, and the heart dwells in His presence!

Vers. 23-25. How precious to know that whatever may be one's calling, the believer is privileged

to do all things to the Lord and not to man. What a comfort this must have been to the slave!

The believer labors, but it is not merely for earthly recompense; in serving Christ, in his labor, there is a recompense to be looked for by and by.

If oppressed, he bears it, and leaves the issue with God who has said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." With Him there is no respect of persons.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

"Masters, give to bondmen what is just and fair, knowing that ye also have a Master in the heavens.

"Persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us also, that God may open to us a door of the word to speak the mystery of Christ, on account of which also I am bound, to the end that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak.

"Walk in wisdom towards those without, redeeming opportunities. Let your word be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so as to know how ye ought to answer each one.

"Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow-bondman in the Lord, will make known to you all that concerns me; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that he might know your state, and that he might encourage your hearts: with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known to you everything here.

"Aristarchus my fellow-captive salutes you, and Mark, Barnabas's cousin, concerning whom ye have received orders (if he come to you, receive him), and Jesus called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These are the only fellow-workers for the kingdom of God who have been a consolation to me. Epaphras, who is one of you, the bondman of Christ Jesus, salutes you, always combating earnestly for you in prayers, to the end that ye may stand perfect and

complete in all the will of God. For I bear him witness that he labors much for you, and them in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. Luke, the beloved physician, salutes you, and Demas. Salute the brethren in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the assembly which is in his house. And when the letter has been read among you, cause that it be read also in the assembly of Laodiceans, and that ye also read that from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, to the end that thou fulfil it. The salutation by the hand of me Paul. Remember my bonds. Grace be with you."

Ver. 1. What an incentive is here given to those who, in the providence of God, occupy a place of ascendancy! Masters must not oppress, but give even-handed justice to those under them, remembering they themselves are subject to a heavenly Master.

Ver. 2. "Persevere in prayer, watching in it, with thanksgiving" (*New Trans.*). Again we are reminded that in this epistle the believer is viewed in connection with responsible life, hence the exhortation to "persevere in prayer." To this heavenly atmosphere the spirit of the believer is indigenous: and it is only in this blessed exercise that the Christian can be maintained in communion with God. Prayer expresses our dependence: perseverance, our sense of personal weakness, yet utmost confidence in God (Heb. 5: 7, 8; Luke 20: 42, etc.). Watching speaks of continuity. This is more than importunity in an hour of need: it is the heart conscious of its connection with heaven and separation to God from the world, communing with the One whose wisdom is infinite, whose power is omnipotent, and whose love is im-

measurable and eternal. Thanksgiving naturally follows, for the heart overflows in the presence of the Source of all good.

Vers. 3, 4. The Apostle, realizing his own need, seeks an interest in their prayers. Here again we see how fully he was absorbed in the interests of Christ. He asks not prayer for anything personal—not for his own liberation or need—but that God might give an open door for the gospel, so that the mystery of Christ might be preached worthily.

Ver. 5. The world is ever on the alert to find some occasion of reproach in the life of the believer. Satan is intent upon marring any testimony to the Lord. The believer therefore is to take all occasion from the enemy's hand, walking in wisdom toward those who are without.

Note how clear is the line of demarcation here, the within and without. Within are those who are the Lord's, those who are the children of God. Without are those whose hopes and interests are all bound up with the world. True wisdom, however, will not cease to be active in loving desire for those who are without, and will study that there may be no occasion given for stumbling.

The believer is exhorted to "redeem the opportunities." These lie ready to our hand, like a well-stocked garden. Walking in the fear of God, spiritual perception will be given when and how to speak. There may be little opportunity given even for this, but where the heart is in the peaceful calm of His presence, a testimony will be

rendered which God may use to arouse someone to the unsatisfying portion they possess.

Ver. 6. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt." Here is indicated to us a fruitful source of weakness. We may fail in graciousness. Saying what is true is not enough: there must be the mingling of grace and truth so wonderfully exemplified in the Person of our blessed Lord (see John 1:17; Luke 4:22). Salt is that which preserves and saves from insipidity. What we say should be marked by separation from what is not of God, so that, as questions arise, which are the product of a depraved heart in the darkness of unbelief, the light of divine revelation may be brought to bear and conviction be wrought by the Spirit's power.

Vers. 7, 8. Beautiful is the Apostle's commendation of Tychicus. He was the bearer — with Onesimus—of this letter, and was to assure them of Paul's interest in them, comforting their hearts.

Ver. 9. If, as it would appear, this Onesimus was the runaway slave mentioned in the epistle to Philemon, the wording is very significant. He had been unfaithful in his master's service. Now, grace had changed everything. He is a *faithful* and beloved brother, and one of them.

Ver. 10. The mention of Mark here is interesting when we remember how he withdrew from the work. Evidently he had been restored and become active in the Lord's service once more (see 2 Tim. 4:11). How like the grace of our God! Note also the comment: "Sister's son to

Barnabas." This explains the determined conduct of Barnabas in Acts 15. How subtle the flesh is!

Ver. 11. Beautiful, however, is the Apostle's mention of Mark and Justus: these only of the circumcision had been a comfort to Paul.

Ver. 12. Epaphras was an active laborer, yet not as some would count service. Would there were more such! He labored earnestly in prayer that those in Colosse might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. What a noble servant and how comprehensive his desires! He embraced, also, others in his desires, those of Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Ver. 14. Luke evidently was a faithful attendant, turning his earthly calling to good account. Demas is passed by with a mere mention, significant in the light of 2 Tim. 4: 10.

Vers. 15, etc. These verses have given rise to speculation, some asserting that Paul refers to an epistle to Laodicea which we do not possess, but careful reading would rather show that a certain epistle (probably that to the Ephesians), was in the hands of the Laodiceans, and the Apostle desired that the epistles should be interchanged, for it would appear that the Laodicean company was small, but was not on that account to be passed by.

That request of Paul shows that the epistles were to be considered the property of others than the companies to whom they were addressed, a testimony to the unity which existed among the assemblies in those early days.

Ver. 17 contains a solemn exhortation to

Archippus. A gift given carries a consequent responsibility. We all need stirring up to see that whatever God has put into our hands is dispensed in responsibility to Him.

Ver. 18 is peculiarly touching. These prison epistles were written by an amanuensis, for the Apostle was bound to a Roman guard. The salutation he added, and touchingly excuses the brevity of his own writing by saying, "Remember my bonds." The epistle closes, as it commenced, with the desire,

"Grace be with you."

# PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

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## CHAPTER ONE

"Paul and Timotheus, bondmen of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and ministers; grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I thank my God for my whole remembrance of you, constantly in my every supplication, making the supplication for you all with joy, because of your fellowship with the gospel, from the first day until now; having confidence of this very thing, that he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day: as it is righteous for me to think this as to you all, because ye have me in your hearts, and that both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the glad tidings ye are all participators in my grace. For God is my witness how I long after you all in the bowels of Christ Jesus.

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all intelligence, that ye may judge of and approve the things that are more excellent, in order that ye may be pure and without offence for Christ's day, being complete as regards the fruit of righteousness, which is by Jesus Christ, to God's glory and praise.

"But I would have you know, brethren, that the circumstances in which I am have turned out rather to the furtherance of the glad tidings, so that my bonds have become manifest as being in Christ in all the prætorium and to all others; and that the most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord through my bonds, dare more abundantly to speak the word of God fearlessly. Some indeed also for envy and strife, but some also for good will, preach the Christ. These indeed out of love, knowing that I am set for the defence

of the glad tidings; but those out of contention, announce the Christ, not purely, supposing to arouse tribulation for my bonds. What is it then? at any rate, in every way, whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is announced; and in this I rejoice, yea, also I will rejoice; for I know that this shall turn out for me to salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but in all boldness, as always, now also Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life or by death. For for me to live is Christ, and to die gain; but if to live in flesh is my lot, this is for me worth the while: and what I shall choose I cannot tell. But I am pressed by both, having the desire for departure and being with Christ, for it is very much better, but remaining in the flesh is more necessary for your sakes, and having confidence of this, I know that I shall remain and abide along with you all, for your progress and joy in faith; that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus through me by my presence again with you. Only conduct yourselves worthily of the glad tidings of the Christ, in order that whether coming and seeing you, or absent, I may hear of what concerns you, that ye stand firm in one spirit, with one soul, laboring together in the same conflict with the faith of the glad tidings; and not frightened in anything by the opposers, which is to them a demonstration of destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God; because to you has been given, as regards Christ, not only the believing on Him but the suffering for Him also, having the same conflict which ye have seen in me, and now hear of in me."

This epistle, which is one of Paul's "Prison Epistles," so named because they were written during the Apostle's captivity at Rome (see Acts 28:16), is one of the most precious portions of the New Testament.

It can scarcely be called a "doctrinal epistle," though it contains doctrine, but it gives rather

what is true Christian experience—we might say, normal Christian life—amid all the various circumstances of the wilderness way.

Remembering the Apostle's experiences when he first visited Philippi (see Acts 16), and the practical expression he then gave to what is unfolded in Philippians 4, we see that the truths expressed were no mere fantasy, but the deep-toned experience of his daily life.

It is instructive to note that throughout the epistle "sin" or "sins" is not once mentioned, nor the flesh in its evil character, so that what is often referred to as healthy Christian experience, *viz.*, the constant conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (see Galatians 5:16, 17), is not full Christian liberty, but the contrary. Walking in the Spirit, the soul enters into true Christian experience, and the blessed fruit of the Spirit is manifested (Gal. 5:22, 23).

If, however, as we have seen, "sin" or "sins" finds no mention in the epistle, it is significant to notice that the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned nearly fifty times in the four chapters. This strikingly shows that true Christian experience is the all-sufficiency of Christ in every circumstance and at all times, so that the heart, forgetful of self, is wholly occupied with Another.

The occasion for writing it was the coming of Epaphroditus, their willing messenger, who brought to the Apostle their love-gift, which evidently reached him at a time of need (chap.4:10-19).

Of all the assemblies they seem to have been most constant in their care for the Apostle's needs, and this fresh manifestation of love coming at a moment when faith was tried, and when, evidently, he was feeling the cares of the assembly of God, leads him to pour out his heart, and give to them (and the assembly at large) a view of that precious inner life which made him wholly superior to circumstances.

Let us remember that what is here unfolded is no "Utopian" dream, but the experience of a Christian of like passions with ourselves, and while we may have sorrowfully to admit how far short we come of proper Christian experience, let us be encouraged to see what Christ can be to us, and for us, in every circumstance.

The first eleven verses are evidently introductory, and give us a precious insight into the mutual affection and care that existed between these saints and the one God had used to their blessing.

Ver. 1. Timothy, the one who ever shared the joys and sorrows of the Apostle's path, his true yokefellow, he graciously links with him in addressing them; and in writing he mentions, not only the saints, but the bishops and deacons; this was important, because the personal care of the Apostle among them was no longer possible.

The character of the epistle will be seen in this, that we have not here the foundation of the soul's relationships with God—as we have in the epistle to the Romans—neither have we the deep truths of the other epistles brought out, but the reality

of that bond which unites the saints to Christ and to one another is elucidated.

Vers. 3, etc. The remembrance of them brought only joy and thanksgiving, and if they evinced their love and care by thinking of the Apostle's needs, he ceased not to plead with God for their continued spiritual prosperity.

Vers. 5, 6. It is evident that from the very first these saints had fully identified themselves with the Apostle's labors in the gospel. What a striking contrast this is to what we have in Acts 16, where one of their number manifested such bitter opposition. Thus, however, the exceeding grace of God was manifested, and so here we find that the mention of their confirmed love and care leads him to speak of what produced this and to express his confidence in God as to the future. The Apostle was no longer with them, and deacons and bishops may be no more, but nothing could restrain the infinite love and care of the God of all grace. He can never be taken from His people. He who is the unfailing resource of His people, the unchanging God, remains to us, whatever else the Church has been deprived of through the vicissitudes of time and our unfaithfulness. Hence the Apostle's confidence, for he looks on to the day of Jesus Christ with perfect complacency, assured that whatever was of God must abide.

Vers. 7, 8. What perfect communion is here! What perfect identity with the Apostle! Whatever grace had wrought in him they had their part in it, for it extended to them, and whatever

manifestation of affection on their part, he assures them it is abundantly returned. To this he calls God to witness.

Ver. 9. He valued their love, and desires that it may abound; at the same time he prays that it may be ordered by "full knowledge and all intelligence" (see *New Trans.*). Divine love is never careless in its acting; he desires, therefore, that they may be guided by knowledge and intelligence.

Vers. 10-12. Thus they would judge and approve the things that were more excellent, walking throughout the whole pathway according to the light God had given, that there should be nothing wanting, but that they might be unblameable in that coming day. This would redound to the praise and glory of God. This completes the introductory part of the epistle.

The introductory part of the epistle concluded with ver. 11, we now commence (ver. 12) the subject matter of this beautiful and instructive letter. The Apostle first speaks of his imprisonment, assuring the Philippians that the circumstances in which he was placed had turned out rather for the furtherance of the gospel. To the enemies of the truth it appeared a great triumph that this devoted servant of God should have his liberty curtailed, but the Word of God was not bound, and God over-ruled, causing the wrath of man to praise Him. Taking occasion of His servant's being within the Imperial precincts, He used him among Cæsar's household (see chap. 4:

22). How like our God! Over-ruling our mistakes for His glory and our blessing.

Ver. 14. Certain brethren, who it would appear had at first been discouraged and perhaps ashamed of the Apostle's bonds, had gained confidence as to him, and preached the gospel boldly. In this Paul was comforted, for though set aside from active service himself, the blessed work of God continued.

Ver. 15. Others there were who from base motives preached the Word—such is the heart of man! Jealousy, ever cruel as the grave, had smouldered while the Apostle carried on his ministry, but now this gifted servant is bound, they seek to add affliction to his bonds by putting themselves forward and seeking to disparage the Apostle in the eyes of the saints (ver. 17). They were disappointed in this however (ver. 18), for it had a reverse effect, increasing the happiness of the Apostle and drawing the hearts of the saints closer to him.

Note: He rejoiced *that Christ was preached*. We need this same largeness of heart to take in whatever is of Christ, but we must not suppose that Paul would fellowship these sorry preachers, because they preached Christ. We may be able to rejoice that Christ is preached, and yet faithfulness to the Lord and His Word would at times preclude from showing active fellowship.

Ver. 19. All that happened only confirmed the faith of the Apostle, as he witnessed triumph after triumph over Satan's machinations. By the continued prayers of the saints and the supply of

the spirit of Jesus Christ, all would turn to his practical salvation. It is beautiful to see how the spirit of Christ marked the Apostle; his entire unselfishness and lack of jealousy show how completely his soul was wrapped up in the purpose of God and the glory of Christ. Paul connects himself with every triumph of God's grace, making it his own.

Ver. 20. There would therefore, be no shame, whatever the decree of Cæsar, for though at any time (humanly speaking) he might be led forth to martyrdom, all was well; Christ would be glorified, whether by his life or death.

Ver. 21 gives the source of all his joy; CHRIST, not service, was his life. "To me to live—Christ" (Leave out the word in italics "is," and you will get the meaning more clearly), "to die, gain." Happy servant! Perhaps it had not always been thus manifest, when in busy, active service his whole soul was absorbed in the blessing of men and the good of God's people. Sometimes it is good for us to remember that while God is graciously pleased to use earthen vessels to convey the living water, He could at any time set us aside, and His work would go on just the same.

Ver. 22. *The New Translation* (J. N. D.) reads: "But if to live in the flesh is my lot, this is for me worth the while, and what I shall choose, I cannot tell." That is, to live would be Christ and His service, and therefore "worth while;" on the other hand it would be personal gain to die.

How far removed from human conception is this wonderful state! Absolutely superior to cir-

cumstances, and the heart so completely outside earthly things that Paul is unable to make a choice (were the choice his) to live or die. Nothing but the heart enraptured with Christ could produce this, for man naturally clings to life, and to the majority, to die *is loss—not gain*. Lord, give us to know *Thee* after this fashion!

Vers. 23-26. Personally, Paul longed to depart, but, true servant that he was, his Master's interests were paramount, and He who loved the assembly and gave Himself for it tenderly watched over and cared for His own. Paul enters into the spirit of this; consequently, for their sakes it may be well to abide, and this confidence he has, that the Lord would leave him to His people a little longer. How absolutely Christ fills every thought of his heart!

Ver. 27, *New Translation*, reads: "Only conduct yourselves worthily of the glad tidings of the Christ." He now turns to express his desire concerning them. Their joy would be full to see him, but whether present or absent, he desires that their conduct should adorn the gospel, and that oneness of mind, standing, as it were, shoulder to shoulder in testimony and conflict, might mark them.

Ver. 28. Thus they need not fear: the battle was the Lord's. And while the enemy might rage—sad testimony to their own condition and end—to the saints it was a token of their salvation, ultimate and final.

This is the aspect of salvation throughout the epistle: while the soul rests upon the work of

Christ, and thus is saved, the Christian is journeying through the wilderness to the glory, and when toil and conflict are over, salvation will be complete.

Vers. 29, 30. Not only were they, by grace, brought to know Christ, but they were allowed to suffer for His sake. This he himself counted joy, and he desires that they also might realize the same privilege. Thus they would share the Apostle's sufferings.

#### CHAPTER TWO

"If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and compassions, fulfil my joy, that ye may think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing; let nothing be in the spirit of strife or vain glory, but, in lowliness of mind, each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not each his own qualities, but each those of others also. For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, taking His place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and granted Him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory.

"So that, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much rather in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both the willing and the working according to His good pleasure. Do all things with-

out murmurings and reasonings, that ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life, so as to be a boast for me in Christ's day, that I have not run in vain nor labored in vain. But if also I am poured out as a libation on the sacrifice and ministration of your faith, I rejoice, and rejoice in common with you all. In like manner do ye also rejoice, and rejoice with me. But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus to you shortly, that I also may be refreshed, knowing how ye get on. For I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on. For all seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ.

"But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child a father, he has served with me in the work of the glad tidings. Him therefore I hope to send immediately, as soon as I shall see how it goes with me; but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall soon come; but I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-workman and fellow-soldier, but your messenger and minister to my need, since he had a longing desire after you all, and was distressed because ye had heard that he was sick; for he was also sick close to death, but God had mercy on him, and not indeed on him alone, but also on me, that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow. I have sent him therefore the more diligently, that seeing him ye might again rejoice, and that I might be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such in honor; because for the sake of the work he drew near even to death, venturing his life that he might fill up what lacked in your ministration toward me."

In this second chapter Christ is set before us as our pattern. Christian humility is its theme.

Ver. 1 reads (*New Translation*, J. N. D.): "If then, there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit,

if any bowels and compassions." In this verse the Apostle doubtless refers to what he himself had enjoyed, as the result of receiving from them the expression of their fellowship and care: his cup of joy would be full if among themselves this same spirit were in evidence.

From chap. 4:2 we learn that since the Apostle had left them, certain seeds of dissension had been sown, and as with every root of bitterness, there was a very grave danger of the many being defiled (see Heb. 12:15). The Apostle takes occasion, therefore, to speak of this.

Ver. 2. He desired that the same love and fellowship, the same godly care, might be exercised toward one another that had been shown him, so that there might be the manifestation of unity in the Assembly, happy proof that CHRIST, not SELF, fills the vision.

All this very touchingly brings out the unselfish love of the Apostle, a love which thought only of their good, and most tenderly deals with a matter that evidently had caused him much anxiety and exercise. He could not in faithfulness refrain from reproving what was wrong, yet being himself a recipient of their kindness, the position he was placed in would have seemed to have precluded him from administering a reproof. This very kindness, however, opened the way for him to mention what burdened his spirit.

Vers. 3, 4. What can bind God's people together in manifest unity but love? This leads to self-abnegation. "Love does not seek what is its own" (1 Cor. 13:5, *New Trans.*), but in humility seeks

to serve others. How foreign is this to the natural man! What but Christ known and enjoyed could produce such fruit! We do well to ponder these short pregnant sentences and seek that they may be written upon the fleshly table of our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who alone can enable us to put them into practice.

“Let nothing be done through strife and vain glory.”

“In lowliness of mind let each esteem other **BETTER** than himself.”

“Look not every man on his own things.”

“But every man on the things of others.”

How much sorrow and declension the people of God might have been saved had these simple exhortations been heeded! What a needed word for our day, when self-exaltation is the ruling passion among men, causing oftentimes untold sorrow, both in the world and among the people of God. There is little competition along the line of self-abnegation, but let us remember the words of our Lord: “Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbled himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14: 11).

Ver. 5. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” What a beautiful incentive to humility and loving service we have here! His mind should be our mind, for He has left us an example that we should follow His steps (read 1 Peter 2: 21 to 23).

Vers. 6, 7. What a striking contrast we have here to the first man—Adam! He was in the

form of man, and fain would be as God—this the Devil promised (Gen. 3:5). Pride of heart led Adam to believe his lie; he stepped out of his appointed place, and verified the truth of God: "Thou shalt surely die." Adam reached death by disobedience.

The blessed Lord could claim everything: the glory was His. He subsisted in the form of God: myriads of angels were His willing servants, yet, in love, He emptied Himself, taking His place in the likeness of men, as a bondservant, the very lowest condition of manhood.

How touchingly this reminds us of His words, "I am among you as He that serveth" (Luke 22:27).

Read Exodus 21. Here we get a beautiful analogy. The Hebrew slave, in love, became a willing bondman, and took upon himself the marks of perpetual servitude (Exod. 21:1-6).

Ver. 8. As *God* our Lord laid aside His glory to take human form. As *Man* He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Note these words, for death by *crucifixion* was the most ignominious end possible. All this shows how low He stooped! From the throne of glory to the throes of Calvary, from the brightness of God's eternal dwelling-place to the distance and darkness of death.

But this humiliation only proves His deity. Who else could leave his first estate rightly? For man to do so was sin, and this is what our first parent sought to do, with such dire consequences. But He—blessed Master—reached death by *obedience*.

Ver. 9. As *Man* He humbled Himself; as *Man* God has highly exalted Him. Perfect answer to His humiliation! The earth could only give a manger for His advent, a malefactor's gibbet for His death, and a borrowed tomb for His burial, but God enthroned that blessed Man in glory, giving Him a name above every name, a name of everlasting renown (see Ps. 72: 17-19). What a wonderful fulness is here: "He who descended is the same also that has ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4: 10).

Ever worthy, as to His eternal Person, to have the place of supremacy, having taken a relative place, through His humiliation, He now has title AS MAN, to a place on high, and the righteousness of God sets Him there. In this connection read John 16: 10. This is the passive testimony of the Holy Spirit. The fact that He is here is a testimony to the world of its unrighteousness in crucifying Christ, but also of God's righteousness, for the Spirit testifies to an exalted Christ.

Vers. 10, 11. "God has made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ," was Peter's testimony; again, "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ: *He is Lord of all.*" It is as the blessed Man, once humbled, He is now exalted, and to Him, as Lord, every created intelligence must bow. Every knee must bow and every tongue confess.

Here I cannot refrain from giving a quotation from the late J. N. D.:

"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 in love; He chose to serve. Christ chose to take the lowest place—He who was able to humble Himself. AND WE? Oh that we were more like Him!"

Ver. 12. Having spoken of the obedience of Christ, the Apostle here takes occasion to exhort the Philippians, for the path of faith and self-abnegation was the path taken by the Lord and left for His people to tread. "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, 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, for it is God who works in you, both the willing and working according to His good pleasure" (*New Trans.*).

He desires that they should do even better during his enforced absence from them than when among them. With no human prop to lean on, they were now consciously cast upon God. He wrought for them and in them. This should energize them as they faced the power of the enemy.

Deprived of the Apostle's care and power, they were not deprived of God and His grace; it was but the occasion of proving the reality of salvation. Whatever else the people of God may have lost through the vicissitudes of time, the power of God remains unchanged and His Word and Spirit abide till the end.

This much mis-used passage we need to clearly understand. It is not (as often misquoted),

"Work for your own salvation," but "Work out," and the fact that the Apostle says, "For it is God that worketh in you," shows it is opposite to man's working. We need to see that salvation (and every other blessing in the epistle) is connected with the end of the Christian course; even imputed righteousness is linked with the future and connected with the day of display (see chap. 3:9, 10). The epistle views the believer as a stranger here pressing towards the goal, the consummation of all his hope. Fear and trembling are not as to the final result, but fear and anxiety lest the flesh should outwardly nullify what had been wrought in them. Paul's confidence was in God; there he found rest, and while unable to be with them he can commit them to God, in the consciousness that He would work in them a willing and doing of *His good pleasure*.

Vers. 14, 15. The exhortation here flows out of the first part of the chapter. How vividly these characteristics were seen in the Lord Jesus, and what a striking contrast to what marks the natural man!

Compare 1 Cor. 10:10, 11, where Israel is referred to. "Murmurings and disputings" characterized their wilderness journey, so that instead of being a testimony for God among the nations, His name was blasphemed among the Gentiles through them. These things happened unto them for our instruction. Israel failed in testimony; the Lord took the nation's place on earth as a fruit-bearer, and now during His absence the assembly is left to *witness* for God.

With these moral characteristics of Christ seen, what a wonderful power would the passive testimony be!

The Apostle had already told them (chap. 1: 29) that they were not only privileged to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for His sake. To carry out these precepts, so entirely contrary to the spirit of the world, involves suffering, but grace is ever sufficient in Christ.

Ver. 16. Walking according to God and in manifest unity, they were lights in the midst of moral darkness, holding forth the Word of life. This would cause the Apostle to rejoice in the day of Christ, that his labor had not been in vain in the Lord.

Service and its reward are always connected with the day of Christ's appearing. Our place in heaven will be through sovereign grace, and every saved one will share alike in all the joy and blessing connected with the Lord's coming *for* His people, but our place in the Kingdom when the Lord reigns will be determined by our conduct here. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). To that day the Apostle looks forward with confidence.

Ver. 17. Their love and devotion to Christ had been evidenced by the care bestowed upon His servant; this was an offering to God, a sacrifice well-pleasing, and viewing the Philippians as the substance, he speaks of himself as only the drink-offering; that is, his life poured out upon the offering. He was ready for death, to pour out his life in the same blessed service; not only so,

he would joy in it—beautiful and touching example of a thoroughly devoted heart, finding every spring of joy in communion with the Lord—and so he reasons (ver. 18) they would joy and rejoice to do the same as to the Lord and His service.

Ver. 18. However great his confidence in God concerning them, his care for them was not lessened. Love can never cease to interest itself in its objects, so that while leaving them in the hands of God, the Apostle, anxious to know their state, would send Timothy. In him the same spirit was manifested; he was like-minded with the Apostle, the only one who would naturally care for their state. Others sought their own things and not the things that were Jesus Christ's. What a sad comment on their state, a condition directly contrary to the truth developed in the earlier part of the chapter (see ver. 4).

Ver. 22. Timothy was his son in the faith, and seems to have been greatly enriched by the ministry of the Apostle, so that his care for the people of God partook of the same character. Though evidently gifted as an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5) his heart went out to the people of God, and, like the Apostle, he labored for their spiritual prosperity. This is a pattern we may well emulate. Never divorce the work of the Gospel from the upbuilding of the assembly; it is fatal in its effect.

As a son with the father Timothy had served with the Apostle in the Gospel, and doubtless—as must always be the case—now departure had set in, the bonds between these two like-minded men were only strengthened.

It must have been a great comfort to the Apostle to find a young fellow-laborer entirely one with him in his solicitude for the assembly of God and the Gospel testimony.

Vers. 23, 24. He would send him as soon as he knew how it would go with him, yet he had confidence in the Lord that he would soon have liberty to visit them.

Vers. 25-30. Then there was Epaphroditus, who had brought their gift. How blessedly the same spirit is manifested in him, though neither an Apostle nor an evangelist! He had evidently risked his life to perform this service, and now he so counts upon the love of the saints that he sorrowed because they had received news of his sickness! Surely all this speaks of the same unselfish love and care for others that the Apostle had inculcated, a beautiful testimony to Christian affection and the reality of those bonds which neither time nor eternity can sever.

Paul sends to them this unselfish and devoted brother, knowing their desire to see him. His own sorrow would also be the less by their joy.

How precious are these bonds which unite the people of God, and how blessedly the fruits are found everywhere in this chapter.

All this, whether as to Paul, Timothy or Epaphroditus, is but the exemplification of the truth contained in the first part of the chapter; all is connected with that blessed One who humbled Himself even unto death.

## CHAPTER THREE

"For the rest, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord: to write the same things to you, to me is not irksome, and for you safe. See to dogs, see to evil workmen, see to the concision. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh. Though I have my trust even in flesh: if any other think to trust in flesh, I rather: as to circumcision, I received it the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the assembly; as to righteousness which is in the law, found blameless; but what things were gain to me these I counted, on account of Christ, loss. But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ; and that I may be found in Him, not having my righteousness, which would be on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith, to know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead. Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing—forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. As many therefore as are perfect, let us be thus minded; and if ye are any otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you. But whereto we have attained, let us walk in the same steps. Be imitators all together of me, brethren, and fix your eyes on those walking thus as you have us for a model (for many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of

the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is the belly, and their glory in their shame, who mind earthly things): for our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself."

Ver. 1. Again the apostle strikes a note of joy. Whatever else may cause anguish, and whatever changes may take place, the unchanging Lord is the same; in Him they could rejoice.

In this chapter Christ is set before the believer as the Object of the heart, the Goal of all his hopes. Christian energy is inculcated. God would have us delight in the One who fills His own heart. Satan's effort is ever to draw us aside, and the flesh is ever ready to vaunt itself, sometimes proud of its piety and spiritual attainment; at other times we may become depressed by self-occupation, but to "Rejoice in the Lord" is the great antidote which lifts the heart completely outside self and gives us power to stand when the current of evil and departure has set in.

Mark that both here and in chapter 4 it is not joying in circumstances, nor is it rejoicing in those daily mercies so bountifully bestowed, nor in the gifts and blessings which are ours, neither is it in our soul's salvation, or future glory, but in HIMSELF.

However adverse our circumstances, however much we may have to mourn over ecclesiastical departure from the truth, nothing need prevent the heart rejoicing in the Lord.

It was not "irksome" (*New Trans.*) to write thus to the Philippians; for them it was safe. Already principles were at work in the assembly which, unless checked, would lead to departure from the truth, and thus the Apostle would put them on their guard against that which threatened to undermine the very faith of Christianity.

The Apostle then proceeds to speak of that which would prevent their rejoicing in the Lord.

Ver. 2. Judaistic teachers were at their unholy work. Their principles, if accepted, would displace a glorified Christ, and in place bring in the discordant element of man's religion, giving the flesh a place, and putting them back thereby in the place of alienation from God.

Note that the Apostle is not dealing with the flesh in a bad sense here, but flesh at its very best, attached to a religion which had the weight of antiquity (formerly approved of God), but which had been set aside in the cross of Christ.

Another has said, "Sanctified self is a poor substitute for a glorified Christ," and Paul realizing this, sensible of what he—and they—had been delivered from, does not spare the teachers or what they taught. "Beware of dogs," unclean, shameless and malicious; "Beware of evil workers"—those who wrought wickedly under the guise of religion; "Beware of the concision"—a term of contempt and reproach, describing those who would reinstate and improve man in the flesh. It was trimming off, instead of a total cutting off.

The Apostle's language may seem severe, but where the glory of Christ is concerned, faithful-

ness demands the most unsparing judgment against anything that would detract from it. There cannot be neutrality when evil vaunts itself, and love is ever jealous of its object.

Ver. 3. "For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (*New Trans.*). The "we" is emphatic, and the cross is referred to as having completely separated unto God, from sin and the domination of the flesh, setting us apart for Himself, that we may worship Him by the Spirit. Connect with this John 4: 20-25. Like many another, the woman made everything of the place. Let us not fall into the same error, *viz.*, think only of outward ecclesiastical correctness, but remember that worship must ever be by the Spirit. There is no such thing as "public worship"—a conglomeration of saved and unsaved persons met together to sing or hear a sermon is not worship; only those purged from their sins can worship (see Heb. 10: 2, 19-22). We have a sample worshipper in John the Baptist (see John 1: 36). His heart was completely entranced with the glorious Person before him and instinctively he said, "Behold the Lamb of God," so that true worship is the heart wholly absorbed with the PERSON and bowing with adoration before Him for what He is, as well as what He has done. This is expressed in praise and thanksgiving.

We rejoice in Christ Jesus. That blessed New Man, in the new place, fills the heart with delight; everything finds its center in Him. In the flesh

we cannot boast, in it we have learned no confidence can be placed. Faith takes sides with God in its utter condemnation, and all that appeals to it—religiously—is refused, and we boast in that risen One who has completely delivered from all that is of man.

The history of Abraham affords us a beautiful illustration of this, for we see how God made Himself known (Gen. 17) as the One who could bring life out of death; then Isaac is supreme, and as a result Ishmael—a type of the flesh—is displaced.

Vers. 4-6. If any had ground for confidence in the flesh and for boasting, Paul could surpass them all, for what we have in these verses was unquestionably true. Of pious parents who were zealous of the law, observing its rites, able to trace his genealogy correctly, an out-and-out Hebrew, and by choice a Pharisee, his zeal had been fully demonstrated by his efforts to put down what appeared in his eyes an innovation against Judaism (Acts 8:3; also chapters 9:1,2; 23:1; 26:4-11), persecuting the Church. As to human righteousness, he was without reproach—as far as his fellows were concerned—but that “light above the brightness of the sun” had totally eclipsed the brightest light in the Jewish economy, and completely revolutionized every thought and desire of Paul, so that what he (and every other orthodox Jew) considered gain, was counted loss for Christ.

It must have been a terrible discovery for Paul when he learned that the One whose name he despised, and against whom all his religious venom

was directed, was the chosen One of God, His Anointed—the One in whom all His delight centered—yet terrible as that discovery was, he was irresistibly drawn to Him, and that risen glorified Lord was henceforth his all in all.

Ver. 8. “But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may win Christ” (*New Trans.*).

We have already seen that the Apostle estimated everything he formerly boasted in (as a godly Jew) by the revelation of Christ glorified, and as a result, what was considered among men gain, was now—to him—loss, for his zeal in the Jewish religion had led him to open antagonism against God’s Anointed: “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest” (Acts 9:5).

Now the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus outweighed all beside, and though that knowledge had led to deprivation and suffering, every past advantage was gladly thrown aside as an obnoxious thing, since Christ had absorbed his being.

It is in proportion as we realize that every thought or purpose of God centers in that blessed, glorified Man, that all that is of the flesh—good as well as bad—becomes an offensive thing, and what is known of Him produces the desire to grow in that blessed knowledge (see 2 Pet. 3:18).

Ver. 9. Note the expression here, “And be found in Him,” also ver. 10, “That I may know Him,” and again (ver. 21), “like Him.” It is the

Person in whom God was fully revealed that Paul desired to gain (ver. 8); and in connection with this, the desire to "know Him" was the acquisition of the righteousness which is of God by faith. Note in this verse the two expressions, "In Him" and "Of Christ." In these two sentences we have what we might speak of as subjective and objective faith in Christ, what we are brought into, and its enjoyment.

Vers. 10, 11. "To know Him and the power of His resurrection." This again is subjective knowledge. He knew Christ as his Saviour surely, but he desired a fuller knowledge of His glorious Person and the power of His resurrection.

Realizing in his own soul how complete was the triumph of Christ, and being united to Him in resurrection, the Apostle desired the power of it, though it might mean conformity to His death, so that, wherever his Lord was, there he might be. Read John 12:26. This was not a transient thought, but a deep, settled desire to have part in His sufferings (not substitutionary, of course, but what He passed through as the Righteous Man here), and even die a martyr's death, so as to fully participate in the power of His resurrection.

Connect this with Mark 10:17-40, which gives us the opposite of Paul's spirit. The young man clung to his own righteousness and social position, refusing the path that the Lord trod, the flesh—as ever—shrinking from suffering. Then with James and John there was the desire for a good place in the kingdom, and little sense of how the Lord Himself would reach it. His cup Paul de-

sired to drink, and be baptized with the same baptism, not to gain a good place in the kingdom, but to be fully identified with his Lord.

Another has pointed out the difference, in this connection, between the ministries of Peter and Paul. Peter speaks of himself as "a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." Paul, as the result of the revelation of the glory, desired to have part in and share Christ's sufferings.

Note the expression, "If any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead" (*New Trans.*). The alteration of the last clause is important. All will arrive at the resurrection of the dead (see John 5:28,29); but resurrection from among the dead is the hope peculiar to the saints of God—the first resurrection. It was this the Apostles could not understand on the Mount of Transfiguration (see Mark 9:10, *New Trans.*). Every godly Jew believed in the resurrection of the dead (see John 11:24; Acts 23:6-8, etc.). Paul looked for more, *viz.*, to be raised and glorified when the Lord comes for His own (see 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Ver. 12. "Not that I have already obtained, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession, seeing that I also have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus" (*New Trans.*).

This joyous hope had not yet been realized; as yet he had not obtained the prize, neither was he yet perfected.

Note the difference in the Authorized and New Translations, *viz.*, "perfect" and "perfected."

Twice in this chapter we have perfection spoken of (vers. 12, 15). In the former, "perfected" is resurrection and conformity to Christ in glory; in the latter, "perfect" is full Christian growth.

Paul, then, was not yet perfected, but for this he had been taken possession of by Christ Jesus, and, therefore, he pursued with spiritual energy, counting everything that would deter him an offense.

Vers. 13, 14. "I do not count myself to have obtained possession" (*New Trans.*). The prize was not yet within his grasp, but leaving all things behind, with divine energy he pressed forward to the goal. Again we need remember that in this epistle the believer is looked at as in the wilderness, traveling on to future glory.

Oneness of purpose marked this faithful servant, a single eye for God's glory, an undivided heart for Christ. The prize of the calling on high was always before him.

Vers. 15, 16. Everyone who understood true Christian position would be like-minded; if there were those—as yet—not in Christian liberty, God would reveal the truth to them; those more instructed were not to despise others; all were to walk together in the enjoyment of that unto which all had attained.

Ver. 17. "Be imitators of me" (*New Trans.*). This surely was not to fix their eyes upon himself as an object—he had sought to concentrate their vision on Christ, but the exhortation is in connection with his spiritual energy and oneness of purpose. The revelation of the glory and his

participation in it being realized, with undivided heart he is faithful to that revelation, and therefore gives himself as an example— a wonderful thing to be able to do.

Vers. 18, 19. Others there were of whom he had often spoken, unregenerate men, who were in the bosom of the professing Church (sad testimony to the condition of the professing Body); these were earthly in desires, of the earth, enemies of the Cross of Christ, who only sought earthly things. The cross had no place with them; they were enemies, glorying in their shame; their end was destruction.

Note: These evil, loose-livers were not necessarily in the assembly at Philippi, but the Apostle speaks of the condition of the professing Body; the low moral state left room for these debased creatures (see ver. 2) to keep in the company of believers.

With weeping the Apostle mourns over the effect of their presence and utters their condemnation. These evil men have, alas, stupendously increased, and the bosom of the professing Church has become the haven of sensual professors, so that the evil being present, the same exhortations are needed. There is, however, the same blessed Object for our hearts, the same power to sustain God's people in the path of faith and faithfulness.

Vers. 20, 21. *Their* end was destruction; the believer's finale, conformity to Christ. "Our commonwealth" (or, literally rendered, "our association of life") is in heaven. All our spiritual relationships are formed there; from thence

we look for the Saviour, who will carry out perfectly the purpose for which the believer has been saved, *viz.*, entire conformity to Christ. Blessed hope, glorious consummation!

## CHAPTER FOUR

"So that, my brethren, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, thus stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I exhort Euodia, and exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord; yea, I ask thee also, true yokefellow, assist them, who have contended along with me in the glad tidings, with Clement also, and my other fellow-laborers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

"Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known of all men. The Lord is near. Be careful about nothing; but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts by Christ Jesus. For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if any praise, think on these things. What ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now however at length ye have revived your thinking of me, though surely ye did also think of me, but lacked opportunity. Not that I speak as regards privation, for as to me I have learnt in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied in myself. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound. In everything and in all things I am initiated both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer privation. I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power. But ye have done well in taking part in my affliction. And know also ye, O Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I

came out of Macedonia, no assembly communicated anything to me in the way of giving and receiving save ye alone; for also in Thessalonica once and even twice ye sent to me for my need. Not that I seek gift, but I seek fruit abounding to your account. But I have all things in full supply and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things sent from you, an odor of sweet savor, an acceptable sacrifice, agreeable to God. But my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. But to our God and Father be glory to the ages of ages. Amen.

"Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me salute you. All the saints salute you, and specially those of the household of Caesar. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen."

This last chapter of the epistle gives us Christian satisfaction (vers. 11, 12) and Christian strength (ver. 13).

Ver. 1. "So that, my brethren, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, thus stand fast in the Lord, beloved" (*New Trans.*). The mention, at the close of the previous chapter, of the blessed hope, encourages the heart in the midst of departure from the truth (see Rev. 2: 25; 3: 11).

Here the Apostle tenderly addresses the Philipians (note the repetition of the word "beloved" in the verse) ; they were his present joy and future crown; to them he can breathe out all that filled his heart as he viewed the sad departure from the truth, for when walking in a common path of faithfulness to the Lord and His truth, the bond of love is strengthened. He exhorts them to stand fast in the Lord. "In the Lord" is a characteristic expression of the epistle, as "in

Christ" characterizes the epistle to Ephesians. The latter, it has already been pointed out, gives our "standing," and the former, agreeing with the character of the epistle, as pointed out in our first study, is connected with our state.

Others might depart from the truth in doctrine and practice; his desire was, that they might stand fast in the Lord, for however lonely the path might be, and however painful to see those in whom he once had confidence slackening their zeal and becoming estranged in affection, the Lord was the same, and with the eye fixed upon Him, the waters of Marah ("bitterness") become sweet (Exod. 15: 25).

Ver. 2. A gentle rebuke is administered here to two sisters who, it is evident, had allowed the enemy to sow discord. A root of bitterness had sprung up which threatened to defile many. Perhaps they were among those sisters mentioned in the next verse as associated with the Apostle's service, but their service had outrun their communion, and thus the flesh had betrayed them.

How we need the exhortation of Hebrews 12: 15! James also warns us against an unbridled tongue (chap. 3), and says, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" Once discord is sown, who can tell the far-reaching results?

Ver. 3. It is generally thought that Epaphroditus, who was the bearer of the letter (and probably the one who wrote it under the Apostle's dictation), is here addressed as "true yokefellow."

The form of the verse in the original, "Yea, I ask thee also, true yokefellow, help those women,"

etc., would give the impression that Euodias and Syntyche were in the mind of the Apostle. Grace and divine love bear with the weaknesses of others. Epaphroditus is therefore exhorted to help them, together with Clement and others who had faithfully labored. Their names were recorded on high, to be remembered when all service done unto His name will be richly rewarded.

Ver. 4. The Apostle exhorts the faithful, as in chap. 3, that in their Christian walk they might be above the circumstances of the way. "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice." Think of the surrounding gloom out of which this heavenly light shone! He was a prisoner in chains, with all the attendant discomfort and deprivation; not only this, but what greatly troubled his spirit—the condition of the Assembly, which often caused him to weep in secret before God, yet the heart found unalloyed happiness in the One who never changes, and the blessed Apostle encourages them—and us—to rejoice in the Lord. This does not lead to stoicism, indifference to sorrow or circumstances, but the heart knows a joy which is unaffected by time and trouble, which indeed only increases when outward circumstances are distressing, and becomes purified and sweeter as earthly wells of happiness dry up. This joy is "in the Lord;" there all is unchanging and eternal. He is THE SAME, and our joying in Him, when everything is against us, is a testimony to His worth and preciousness.

Again he adds, "Rejoice." What a note of triumph from a prisoner in chains, who might, at

any moment, be called upon to endure martyrdom! How completely we are here lifted above outward circumstances!

Ver. 5. "Let your gentleness be known unto all men, the Lord is near" (*New Trans.*). This will be the natural outcome, for the more we are in company with the Lord, the greater is the moral conformity to Him. Gentleness is mentioned in Galatians 5:22 as produced by the Spirit—Christ-likeness. Where He is the portion of the heart, the human passions are not roused by the little vexations and trials of the wilderness. These things are but for a moment, and what men strive for will be as nothing when the day of glory dawns. The Lord is at hand, and as we sometimes sing:

"How shall recompense His smile,  
The sufferings of this little while!"

Ver. 6. Then there are the natural anxieties and cares of daily life, and what a tendency there is to allow these things to weigh down our spirits! (Compare Luke 12:22-34). Let us remember with whom we have to do; God is our refuge and strength, a present help in time of trouble, and He sits unmoved upon the throne by all the happenings in this world of ours; all things serve His might and work out His purposes. With Him we are in relationship; we know His love, and are the objects of His tender care; His ear is ever open to our feeblest cry; therefore, instead of trying to carry our own burden of care and becoming disquieted and distressed, the heart should

instinctively turn to Him. "Be careful for nothing." Not that He would have us unexercised and careless, but we should be without anxiety, presenting our requests with prayer and supplication to Him, mingling also our thanksgiving, for we can already give thanks, being sure of a gracious answer, though it may not be in the way we wish. We approach in the knowledge of a God who loves us infinitely, and make known our requests. It does not say we shall obtain just what we ask—this might be for our hurt; but having spread out our desires before God, and leaving ourselves in His hands, the peace of God garrisons the heart and mind. Read in this connection Psalm 3, and note the occasion of David's writing it. When all seemed to have conspired against him, he unburdened his heart before God, and as a consequence he says, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me." So the believer, having cast his burden on the Lord, finds His peace guards the heart and mind. Note the difference here between the "peace of God" and "peace with God." The enjoyment of the former is only known as the believer casts his care on God; the latter—fruit of the death and resurrection of Christ—is a peace known when we trust Him as our Saviour. This peace, founded on an unchanging work, ever abides.

Ver. 8. Treading a path of difficulty, through a world of evil, the believer is to occupy his mind with that which is good, thinking on those things which come from God, He Himself is with us—the God of peace.

The Apostle perfectly exemplified this, and therefore (ver. 9) he is able to say without self-exaltation, "What...ye have seen in me, these things, do, and the God of peace shall be with you."

Vers. 10, 11 give us another cause for rejoicing. Their loving care for his temporal need had flourished again; distance and other circumstances had for a time hindered so that they had not been able to give expression to their love. As to want, although it is evident he had been in need, he had learnt in every circumstance the sufficiency of Christ, and so was SATISFIED—an immense thing surely, and showing the power of this new life, for what person whose every link is with earth could ever say this when outwardly everything is adverse?

Vers. 12, 13. The power to endure and go through every circumstance joyfully was from Christ. He is known as the unchanging, faithful Friend, whose constant love can ever be counted on. Paul had in every circumstance to confide in Him alone. Mark how personal all this is. It is not objective knowledge, but subjective — "I have learned;" "I can do all things," etc.

Vers. 14-18. Nevertheless their care was sweet to the Apostle; they had taken part in his afflictions at a time when it would appear that other assemblies had grown careless, or feared to link themselves openly with Paul the prisoner. Mark the beautiful simplicity with which he writes concerning giving and receiving, being occupied not with personal need, but with the Lord, so that

their offering was "fruit abounding to their account," "an odour of sweet savor acceptable to God."

Vers. 19-23. Mark again the personal pronoun, "my" God, the One whom he well knew, whom he had proved, would supply all their need, and the measure of it is given—"His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Therefore he concludes: "But to our God and Father be glory to the ages of ages. Amen." (*New Trans.*). Here he links them with himself, applying what he had personally proved to the Philippians.

Salutations close the epistle. Even in Cæsar's household God had given fruit, and thus this precious letter closes with the final desire that the grace of our Lord Jesus be with their spirit.