



Christian Education.

By F. Lock.

INDIANAPOLIS, 1909.

LONDON :
G. MORRISH, 20, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.



PRICE ONE PENNY.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

(PHILIPPIANS IV. 11-13.)

THIS epistle has been in my thoughts of late because of its peculiar character, as no other epistle, so far as I know, has at all the same distinct elements in it.

A brother said to me in connection with our readings, the profit of which has been felt by all of us, what does this effect? This suggested to me this epistle, as bringing out the thought that what has been before us in figure, in connection with David, as setting forth Christ and the sphere of things which He dominates in power, and grace, and blessing, together with the effect that is produced, is very largely illustrated by the one who wrote this epistle. You will note that it is what you would call an individual epistle. It does not take up church truth as such, and another thing one notices in connection with it is that it is not a corrective epistle; it is not written to set right things that are wrong, but on the contrary, the whole epistle from beginning to end breathes the most beautiful spirit of one who is thoroughly

content, absolutely at rest, who has no unsolved questions or unsatisfied desires. This suggests that the line of truth the Spirit of God is bringing out to us is intended to have a formative effect in the soul and spirit, so that if place be given, with real subjection to the Spirit, sowing to, and walking in the Spirit, just such effects will be produced.

One is free to say that as a general thing one does not find a great amount of rest and thorough satisfaction amongst the saints. Why is it? It is a fact that I am sure must have often impressed us, that looking at Christians in general, when it is not a question of the forgiveness of sins, or of peace with God, or of the assurance of reaching heaven when the whole of the story is over, they are not *restful*. There may be no misgivings as to one's soul's salvation, but when it comes to the practical, experimental side of things, there is a great deal of unrest and pressure, instead of the peaceable fruits of righteousness. So one turns to the Epistle to the Philippians, for the reason that the Spirit of God, I think, never brings before us truth objectively that He does not give us an example in flesh and blood, so to speak, that is, in a living person, of the way in which that truth works out if one is disposed to be really subject to the Spirit. Now that is what one finds in the

man who wrote this epistle. He is a man who has graduated in the school of God and has taken his degree. About such a man there is nothing that is forced or unnatural; so that like effects will be produced in those who are ready to follow along the same path with all that it involves; and therein lies the problem, because it is a path which is not pleasant to the flesh; it is losing one's life in this world, but finding it to life eternal. So if one takes up Paul's ministry, it is profoundly interesting to see the line along which the Spirit of God gives it. If we look at the way in which Paul is taken up, one sees that it is deeply suggestive; there seems no question but that he is the moral successor to Stephen, who was full of the Holy Spirit, and who "looked steadfastly into heaven." Stephen saw, through the fulness of the Spirit, and the fulness of faith, as he looked steadfastly into heaven, a system of glory which centred around the Son of man. That was Stephen's vision. He *saw* the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and his *testimony* was to the Son of man. Now the term Son of man brings before us a sphere of glory of His own. As Man, God has put into His hands the gathering of everything together, and the administration of everything in blessing, the

ordering of a realm which shall be wholly in harmony with the mind of God, the witness to the universe that God was right when He purposed in His counsels to put things into the hand of Man to be administered; that such administration can produce the highest effects of blessing and the perfection of administration, glory, and order; so Stephen's point of view is that he saw the glory of God connected with the Son of man who has that order of things in His hands to bring about, which continues until eventually He delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God is all in all. The witnesses of Stephen's martyrdom brought their garments and laid them down at the feet of a young man whose name was Saul; and what we find in the next chapter (Acts viii.) is a sort of link through the Ethiopian, to whom the testimony is brought of One whose life is taken from the earth. Stephen's life is taken from the earth, following on in the way of the blessed Lord whose life was taken away; and the eunuch says, "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?" Thus in figure morally his life is taken from the earth as Stephen's life was taken actually. Stephen was absent from the body and present with the Lord, and, as passed away from this earth, he ceased to be available as

a living testimony for the Lord. Yet what is wanted here is that living testimony for the Lord, which is found in a man whose life morally has gone from the earth, which is suggested to us by the eunuch's baptism, shewing that he is ready to grasp the light that is put before him, that his life should be taken from the earth as following Jesus. It is characteristic that we hear no more of him after he goes on his way rejoicing ; he disappears from view. Then Saul on his way to Damascus sees the glory, and begins at the point where Stephen left off. The Lord speaks to him from the glory, and Saul comes forth endowed with the garments of witness from Stephen's death. The witnesses had brought the garments and laid them down at his feet, and in chapter ix. Saul has taken such up and put them on as it were, and he comes out with his own peculiar testimony in that chapter, preaching that Jesus is the Son of God, even as Stephen had testified of Him as the Son of man. Saul testifies to that sphere of divine relationships and wondrous affections which have been opened to us in connection with the name of the Father and in connection with the brethren of Christ ; he preaches that Jesus is the Son of God.

Now the line of his testimony in doctrine develops in the same way. As we have heard

this afternoon, in the Epistle to the Romans we have the way of righteousness opened up, and what Paul was led to set forth as doctrine eminently characterised Paul's life as a man. He was wholly recovered to righteousness. What he was as a man in flesh had ceased to characterise or control him in any way. He had lost his life in this world, and now what he sets before the saints in the Epistle to the Romans is that which characterised him in the manner of his life and his walk. It comes out in the Acts and in his epistles. One does not need to inquire what sort of a man he was, because in his measure, and allowing for the frailty of the flesh, what he *said*, that he *was*.

Then we come on to the question of headship : Paul would set that before the Colossians, and he does it as being himself in the good of it in his own soul ; he had embraced with all his affection the headship of Christ. There was no divided mind with Paul about that.

There is nothing mystical or sentimental about what one gets in Philippians, but there is that which Paul reached in a way that is perfectly clear, and which is within the reach of every one whose mind and heart is set upon it—that God shall have His rights, that Christ shall have His place, and that what-

ever stands in the way shall go. I think that comes out in connection with Paul, and so (as it is expressed in Galatians) there is no question at all but that Ishmael is cast out. It comes out as clearly as can be that so far as Paul was concerned he was not a man of two purposes, he was in the liberty of sonship, and he could *speak* of what he *knew*—"For to me to live is Christ." He expresses it in Galatians also, "I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live, I, but Christ lives in me; but in that I now live in flesh, I live by faith, the faith of the Son of God, who has loved me and given himself for me." (N. T.)

If it be the standpoint of Ephesians, which reaches up to the heavenly places, there was nothing that hindered Paul, and therefore he reaches into all the counsels of God that have been set forth in connection with Christ glorified, and we see him moulded into conformity to the truth in that epistle also.

With regard to Stephen, it was requisite, in order that we might see the effect produced in a man, and how far the power of it could go, that he should actually pass out of this scene; but with regard to Paul, who followed as it were along the same lines in connection with the Lord's sphere of things, we now come to a man who is qualified, by conformity to Christ, to stay here; he is quite ready to

go, but in view of the testimony of the Lord, he is brought before us here in Philippians as a man who has learned his lesson in the school of God, and who is, therefore, equally ready to stay. Thus, if we take up this epistle we see in the first chapter that Paul can say, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

We find that our pathway here is greatly affected experimentally, and tested by that with which we are put in contact, and it is intended to be so in the ways of God. We are tried by contact with the saints, with our brethren, and we come into connection with wilderness things in our relationships and home circles and so forth. All that comes properly and naturally in the ways of God with us. What one sees in Paul is that there is not a phase of the exercises, vexations, trials, heart-searchings and sorrows that come out in connection with the saints, but he knew and proved them all, and he loved the saints through all with the deepest devotion. He was now "Paul, the aged"; it is well to remind all here that at the time

he wrote he was a prisoner in Rome ; such is the man who is writing to us when tidings are brought to him in prison that some of the saints were not behaving themselves rightly, and that they were doing all kinds of things, some thinking to add affliction to his bonds in connection with the gospel. Such questions come to us in a practical way. They come before us in the saints. The question which very frequently arises is, whether people will walk with us, or will not walk with us ? Why cannot we do any kind of things in connection with the gospel ? Paul could not go with all kinds of things, but tidings are brought to him that some were doing things thinking to add affliction to his bonds. He does not say, "Go and do the same," but in that Christ is preached he rejoices. He is thankful, whatever occasions it, that Christ is preached. But it leaves those who, in self-will, in contention, and of a wrong spirit, are carrying on this course, exposed in their ways. It is beautiful to see the perfection of the way in which the servant of the Lord can take up and meet that kind of difficulty. How can he ? Because he is instructed. He has "learned," he has had to do with the saints, he has taken up things in relation to Christ and His system ; in everything as it has arisen the point of

view that has presented itself to Paul is—how does this bear upon Christ and His circle of things? So he is enabled, in the most perfect manner, to indicate how one is to withdraw from lawlessness and unrighteousness and yet take up the spirit which the Lord indicated to His disciples when He said "Forbid them not." The Lord does not say "Go with them," but He does say "Forbid them not." Paul expresses very much the same point of view from his prison in Rome, in verses 14 to 18. Again he is enabled to say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." To be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord is great gain, but aged as he was, and prisoner as he was, he was yet wholly interested in the saints, in what pertained to Christ here; so that when the Lord indicates to him that He is going to leave him here a bit longer he says, in effect, "I am very well satisfied with that." Here is a man who is perfectly satisfied, who would count it great gain to leave the world, but who, when the Lord says, "For My interests stay a little longer," is satisfied. What could Satan do with such a man as that? There is a power of testimony against which the god of this world can make no headway, and if there remain one such man on the earth who has caught that spirit,

the testimony of God is secured in that man.

If we turn to chapter ii. we have a manner of spirit brought before us which is most beautiful, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Would that one had time to dwell upon it in all its sweet and precious details, which Paul brings before us, presenting the manner of spirit that came out in Christ Jesus, in His patient service going down even unto death. Then the Spirit of God brings before us, in connection with Paul, and Timothy, and Epaphroditus (that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established) an exhibition of the same mind in men. There are three witnesses in this second chapter, shewing how the manner of mind that was in Christ Jesus had seized upon them, and turned them into practical conformity to Christ. Paul was ready to be offered on the sacrifice and service of their faith. Of Timothy he says, "I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's"; and finally, of Epaphroditus, he says he was sick nigh unto death in the service of the saints; that is what had brought him there; it was the mind that was in Christ Jesus that had so possessed him, that he had lost his life

in this world morally and was near losing his actual life because of his devotion to the saints. Thus it is not only Paul, but like causes produce like effects in others.

Then if we turn to the third chapter we come into the greatness of resurrection: "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." Here was a man who with family, with learning, with political position, with influence and everything of that sort, who says I have left all these things and thrown them away as refuse. And now the object that was before his soul and which shines out in this wondrous light from that prison in Rome was, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings." If in any way you are affected by the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, what can you expect? *Suffering*. It will bring you into the same path with Christ. "Being conformed to his death, if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead." So he goes on and says, "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."

In the last chapter, when he comes in touch with the question of what they are encountering, he brings out that there is the God of peace, and the peace of God that can fill and fortify and garrison the heart. What do *we* know about it in a practical way? Peace *with* God we speak of in connection with our sins, but what do we know of the peace *of* God? Sometimes the question is raised, Why is it that we do not seem to get an answer to our prayers? What are you praying for? Oftentimes the bent of our prayers, the objects that are before us in prayers are things in which we want God to interfere in regard to our circumstances. We are afraid of sickness, or there is a cloud of sorrow that is impending, or there is pressure that we do not see our way through. Perhaps it is weakness and infirmity of body, or we may be in connection with some one who is trying us sorely; or in assembly matters we may be burdened; we petition God as to these things, but it is like praying against a stone wall. There seems to be no response from Him, and we have no peace about it. Well, if one is privileged to turn and look at a man in whom these things are experimentally worked

out, we see one who has no object or desire, nothing to ask for apart from that which is in suitability to Christ, and which is according to the mind of God; therefore when a thing arises he puts it before God, and if he has really learned God, there is peace, rest and satisfaction in the knowledge that he has presented it to Him, and he can thus leave it to Him as to the turn that He will give to that matter in the answer. Will He lift the burden? Will He leave the pressure there? It is immaterial, because "the peace of God shall garrison your hearts through Christ Jesus." And so the man who is in the Roman prison, chained to a soldier, can tell us he has learned in whatsoever state he is therewith to be content. "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."

I just bring these things to our notice, and would lay emphasis and stress upon them as being in line with what has been brought before us in these readings, because if I understand it at all, and if anything practical is to be the outcome of it, it is that the Spirit of God would bring before us that we are connected with an exceedingly great order of

things. There is nothing so great in the universe of God as that into the light of which He has been pleased to bring us, over which Christ is established Head. We are brought not only into the kingdom, but into association with Him; and there is opened out the whole range of the glory that the Father has put upon the Son; so that if we fail to take account of ourselves here upon earth as each one of us having distinctly and definitely our own place in the system which Christ sways (the realisation of which in a sense depends upon us), we miss the mark. There is no *purpose*, so far as I see, in an individual Christian struggling on in an individual pathway through this scene, for he never gets more fit for heaven than the work of Christ has made him; hence unless he takes account of himself as linked up with the headship of Christ, and His administration here on earth, and the testimony in connection with it, he is only an isolated Christian drifting on. One says it in all sobriety; such an one fills no definite place here for God. The line of things that has been before us in these readings is really to bring us to see what is our point of contact with the headship of Christ, what is our position in connection with the ark of the testimony; how we are set in connection with

Levitical service; what we have to do with priesthood and that which enters in before God. So it is—that we should be formed according to Christ, in order that what is of Christ should be under the eye of God here in this scene, and that the character of God should be made known. What one sees in Paul is a man wholly absorbed in the power of these things, and therefore transformed into the character of them; who is at perfect peace with God, at perfect peace with man, and at peace about his own circumstances; in short, a man that no power of the enemy can upset or disturb in connection with the testimony.

F. L.

