Notes on Philippians

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Philippians

Philippians 1

Let us seek, with the blessing of God, to develop a little the special features of this epistle on which we now enter. For the better understanding of what comes before us, we may also compare its character with that of others. Some of its features may be gathered from the very first verse. The Apostle introduces himself in the simplest possible manner: “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons; grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” Elsewhere, even if he presents himself as a servant, he does not fail also to add his apostolic title, or some other distinction by which God had separated him from the rest of his brethren. But here it is not so. He is led of the Holy Ghost to present himself upon the broadest ground to the children of God in Philippi; on this he could fully associate Timotheus with himself. Thus we may gather from the very start of the epistle that we are not to look for the wonderful unfoldings of Christian and Church truth, such as we have in Romans, Corinthians, or Ephesians, where the apostleship of Paul is most carefully stated.

“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle” (Rom. 1). He was not an apostle by birth, but by the call of God. He adds further, that they were saints by the very same divine call whereby he was an apostle — “called to be saints,” both through the sovereign grace of God. There was nothing in either that could have been

an inherent claim upon God. There was deadly sin in both; but the grace of God that had called them to be saints, had called him to be not a saint only, but an apostle. As such, he addresses them in the full consciousness of the place that Christ had given him and them, unfolding the truth from the very first foundations on which the gospel rests, the grace of God, and the ruin of man. Hence in that epistle you have something that more approaches to a doctrinal treatise than in any other portion of the New Testament. God took care that no apostle ever visited Rome, till there were many saints already there, and then He wrote by the Apostle Paul. The proud imperial city cannot boast of an apostolic foundation; yet, spite of that, man has put in the claim and pressed it with fire and sword. Paul, however, wrote in the fullness of his own apostleship and brings out the truth of God to them most carefully, so that the very ignorance of the Roman saints was the occasion for the Holy Ghost to give us the most elaborate statement of Christian truth which the Word of God contains. By Christian truth, I mean the individual instruction which the soul wants in order to the consciousness of its solid standing before God and the duties which flow from it. There the Apostle writes expressly as an apostle. It could not be understood as a human composition. There must be the authority of God, claimed by the Apostle; and while he strengthens them in their position of saints, by the very same he makes room for that development of Christian truth, for which the epistle is remarkable.

In the Corinthians he addresses them, not merely as saints, as individual Christians, but as an assembly; and there also he asserts his apostleship. Does not this serve

to illustrate the truth that there is not a word inserted or omitted in Scripture, but what is full of instruction for our souls if we are willing to be instructed? To the Corinthians he does not add as in Romans, “a servant of Jesus Christ,” but simply, “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God.” There he carefully puts Sosthenes upon his own proper ground, as a brother, while he distinguishes his own apostleship. The reason is obvious. The Corinthians were in a turbulent state, going so far as even to gainsay the apostleship of Paul. But God never lowers what He has given because men do not like it. It was a part, not more of God’s grace to Paul, than of his humble obedience before God, to act and speak as an apostle; if he had not, he would have failed in his duty; he would not have done that which was essential for the glory of God and the good of the saints. Everything is in its proper place. So if the Corinthians were questioning what God had wrought in and by the Apostle Paul, and the place He had given him in His wisdom, the Apostle asserts it with dignity; or rather, the Holy Ghost represents him only as an apostle to them, speaks of others but not as apostles, and addresses the Corinthians as “the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”

None but one who knew what God is to His saints, and how He holds to the power of His own grace, would have contemplated those at Corinth in such sort as this; none but a heart that understood God’s love to His own, and, alas! to what lengths they may be drawn aside where the flesh gains advantage — none but one admirably, divinely acquainted with his own heart and with God —

could ever have addressed them in the language with which that epistle opens. But it was God who was writing through His Apostle. And as the conduct of the Church on earth is the thesis of the epistle to the Corinthians, He shows us there the principle of putting away and of receiving again, the administration of the Lord's supper, and its moral meaning; the working of the various gifts in the Church, etc. All these things, as being the functions of the Church, are found in the epistles to the Corinthians. But even in the exercise of gifts, it is gifts in the assembly. Therefore, there is no reference to evangelizing in 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Corinthians 14, because the evangelist's gift does not, of course, find its exercise within the Church. He goes, properly speaking, outside the Church, in order to exercise that gift. You have prophets, teachers, etc. All these were gifts of a still higher order and regularly exercised in the assembly of God.

Here also we shall see how appropriately the preface falls in with the object of the Holy Ghost throughout: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons; grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Now this is the only church where we have the "bishops and deacons" addressed as well as the saints. The reason may have been that it was, more or less, a transition state. We have three things in the Church of the New Testament. The first is — apostles, acting in the full power of their gift and office. Then, besides deacons, bishops or elders (for these two mean the same officials, only called by a different name), apostolically appointed to the charge which the Lord had given them; the

bishops having to do with that which is internal, the deacons with that which is external, but both of them local offices, while the Apostle had his authority from the Lord everywhere The Holy Ghost shows us thus the full regimen in the churches; that is to say, the apostles acting in their high place, who were called to establish the foundations of the Church practically, and to govern it upon a large scale throughout the whole breadth of the Church of God upon earth; and beside them, these local guides, the bishops and deacons.

Third. The Apostle was now separated from the church, and hence no longer able to watch over the saints personally. He writes accordingly to those who had no longer his apostolic care, not only where they had not, but, in this case, where they had bishops and deacons. Yet in the latest epistles, where the Apostle is filled with the sense of his speedy departure, there is not the slightest allusion to any provision for perpetuating these officers — not even when writing confidentially to one whom he had called on to ordain elders in Crete, nor to another invested with a charge at Ephesus.

Thus, this epistle brings us to a sort of transition. It supposes the assembly in ecclesiastical order. But the Apostle's absence in person seems to be intended of God to prepare the Church for the absence of apostles entirely. Thus God graciously gave the Church a kind of preparation for their removal from the scene. Practically, even while Paul was on the earth, he was shut out from them, and gone from the scene, as far as regarded apostolic vigilance. The time was coming when there would be no longer apostolically appointed bishops and deacons. The Spirit of God was, it would appear, thereby accustoming the Church to find in God

the only stable means of support when apostles would be no longer within reach of those who used to look to them and to claim their wisdom in their difficulties. But though the Apostle was not there, they had the “bishops and deacons,” not a bishop and several deacons, and still less bishops and presbyters (or, priests) and deacons, but several of the higher spiritual guides as well as of the lower.

In those days a bishopric was not a great worldly prize, but a serious spiritual care which, however excellent an employment, was no object of ambition or means of lucre. “If any man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work”; but it called for such self-denial, such constant trial by night and day, deeper even in the Church than from the world without, that it was by no means a thing for the best qualified in the Spirit to rush into, but to take up with the utmost gravity, as that to which he was called of God. For this, among other reasons, the Church never pretended to choose or constitute a bishop. It was invariably by apostolic authority. One or more apostles acted in this — not necessarily Paul only or the twelve. It might be a Barnabas; at least we find in certain cases Paul and Barnabas acting together in choosing elders or bishops. But this may show what a delicate task it was. The Lord never gives it to any person except an apostle or an apostolic man (that is, a man sent out by an apostle to do that work for him, such as Titus and perhaps Timothy). But there the Scripture account closes; and while we have provision for the Church going on, and the certainty of gifts supplied to the end, there is no means laid down for perpetuating the appointment of elders and bishops.

Was there, then, forgetfulness of ordinary need on the Apostle's, nay, on God's part? For this is really what the matter comes to; and he who supposes that anything of the kind was omitted in Scripture thus carelessly, in effect impeaches the faithful wisdom of God. Who wrote Scripture? Either you resort to the wretched notion that God was indifferent and the apostles forgot, or, acknowledging that Scripture flows from the highest source, you have no escape from the conclusion that God was intentionally silent as to the future supply of elders or bishops. But the God who knew and ordered everything from the beginning forgot nothing; on the contrary, He expressly, in His own wisdom, left no means, in the foreseen ruin of Christendom, for continuing the appointment of elders and deacons. Was it not then desirable, if not necessary, for churches to have such? Surely, if we reason thus, apostles were as loudly called for as the lower officials.

The fact is most evident that the same God who has seen fit to withhold a continuous line of apostles? has not been pleased to give the means for a scriptural continuance of bishops and deacons. How is it then that we have no such officers now? Most simple is the answer. Because we have no apostles to appoint them. Will you tell me if anybody else has got them? Let us at least be willing to acknowledge our real lack in this respect; it is our duty to God, because it is the truth; and the owning it keeps one from much presumption. For in general Christendom is doing, without apostles, what is only lawful to be done by or with them. The appointment of elders and deacons goes upon the notion that there is an adequate power still resident in men or the Church. But the only scriptural ordaining power is an apostle

acting directly or indirectly. Titus or Timothy could not go and ordain elders except as and where authorized by the apostles. Hence when Titus had done this work, he was to come back to the Apostle. He was not in anywise one who had invested in him a certain fund to apply at all times where and how he pleased. Scripture represents that he was acting under apostolic guidance. But after the apostles were gone, not a word about the power acting through these or other delegates of the Apostle.

God forbid that we should pretend either to make an apostle or to make light of his absence! It is more humble to say, We are thankful to use what God has given and whatever God may continue to give, without pretending to more. Is there not faith, and lowliness, and obedience in the position that acknowledges the present want in the Church, and that simply acts according to the power that remains, which is all-sufficient for every need and danger? The true way to glorify God is not to assume an apostolic authority that we do not possess, but to act confiding in the power and presence of the Holy Ghost who does remain. It was distinctly the Lord Himself who, working by the Holy Ghost, acted upon all the saints, and who put each of them in that particular place in the body that He saw fit. It is not a question of our drawing inferences from a man’s gifts that he is an apostle. To be an apostle required the express, personal call of the Lord in a remarkable way; and without this there never was adequate ordaining power, personally or by deputy.

As this may help to meet a question that often arises in the minds of Christians, and suggested by a verse such

as we have before us, I have thought it well to meet the difficulty, trusting to the Word and Spirit of God.

The Apostle, then, introduces himself and Timothy as "the servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus." It is not exactly "to the church," as in writing to the Corinthians or the Thessalonians, but to "all the saints." We may gather from this that he is about to speak of what is individual rather than of what belonged to them as a public assembly; but it is not, as in Romans, on the basis of redemption. He was going to enlarge on their walk with God, saluting them as usual with the words, "grace be unto you, and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Before he opens the epistle, the Apostle breaks forth in thanksgiving to God. "I thank my God," an expression often used in this epistle. It also is individual, knowing now the God in whom he trusted, besides being the expression of affection and of nearness. First, says the Apostle, "I thank my God upon my whole remembrance of you" (for such is the true force), "always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy." This leads me to make the observation, that nearness to God is always accompanied by the heart overflowing with the joy which His realized presence necessarily produces, as well as by a spirit of intercession for the objects of God's love on earth. There may be at the same time the deepest exercise of spirit, and not without the keenest pain; because in the presence of God every sin, sorrow, and shame is more truly and fully felt. What God is, is known, and therefore perfect peace; what man is, and therefore the failure is realized and the dishonour brought on Christ is entered into by the Spirit. But here joy is the prevalent and abiding feeling, the great

characteristic effect of the presence of God imprinted on the soul, where the conscience is void of offence toward God and man.

Not that even Paul could thus speak of every assembly, or every saint of God — far from it. His whole remembrance of the Philippian saints opened the sluices of thanksgiving to God. Yet, from the beginning, there was need of prayer; and he was continually supplicating for them all, and this with joy, “for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” What a wonderful thing that a man, though he were the great Apostle of the Gentiles, could so feel, and that there were here below saints of whom he could so write! Alas! in these selfish days we little know what we have lost, and whence we are fallen. He never prayed for these Philippians but with joy, and yet he was constantly bearing them before God. Had the Apostle been here, could he have thought so of us? Yet, wonderful as it was, it was the simple truth; and it is wholesome for our souls to judge ourselves by such a standard.

Another feature of the epistle to the Philippians is, that the practical condition of the soul is here developed more fully than anywhere else; and this not so much doctrinally as in action and experience. The Apostle lays bare his own motives as well as walk, and even Christ’s also. Hence it is peculiarly in this epistle that we find displayed the exercise of individual Christian life. Here we have the power of the Spirit of God acting in the soul of the believer, enabling him to realize Christ in the heart and path here below. But what gave rise to this character of instruction? What circumstances brought it out? The absence of the Apostle from the Philippians, and from his ordinary ministry, while he was imprisoned

at Rome. It was not, as at Corinth, that his absence brought out their ostentatious vanity, and party spirit, and worldly laxity, and quarrelings. It led the Philippians to feel the necessity of living increasingly with, and for, and to Christ. There was nothing for it but each one looking, and helping his brother to look, to the Lord Himself. This being the effect produced, the Apostle was full of joy in thinking of them. He had been several years away, and externally in the most dismal circumstances himself; but his joy was not dimmed one whit. On the contrary, there is not another epistle so full of actually tasted happiness; and yet there was never an epistle written when all on earth seemed more clouded and filled with sorrow. So thoroughly is Christ the one circumstance that rules all others to the believer.

When moving about and seeing both the devotedness of the saints, and sinners everywhere brought to God, one can understand the Apostle’s continual joy and praise. But think of him in prison for years, chained between two soldiers, debarred from the work that he loved, and others taking advantage of his absence to grieve him, preaching the very gospel out of contention and strife; and yet his heart was so running over with joy that he was filling others with it!

Such is the character of the epistle to the Philippians. If there be a witness of the power of the Spirit of God working through human affections, through the heart of a saint on earth, in the midst of all weakness and trial, it is found here. It is not the picture of a man down under trying circumstances, for under them he never is, but consciously more than conqueror. Not that he never knew what it was to be cast down. He who wrote the second epistle to the Corinthians fully experienced all

that which God in His grace made to be a kind of moral preparation for bringing out the comfort that was needed by the saints then and at all times. But this epistle shows us that there is not a single symptom of weariness any more than of perturbation of spirit. You could not tell from it that there was any flesh at all, though he was one who fully took the flesh into account elsewhere, as in Romans and Corinthians, where you have a fearful picture of what may be the condition of the Christian and of the Church.

Not only in Philippians is there no trace of this, but neither is there the dwelling upon our privileges and blessings, as in Ephesians 1. What we have is the enjoyed power of the Spirit of God, that lifts a man day by day above the earth, even when he is walking upon it; and this by making Christ everything to the soul, so that the trials are but occasions of deeper enjoyment, let them be ever so many and grave. This is what we specially want as Christians in order to glorify God; and this is what the Holy Ghost urges on us when we have entered into our proper Christian birthright, individually, as in Romans, and our membership of the Church, as in Corinthians, and our blessing in heavenly places in Christ, as in Ephesians.

Then comes the question, How am I enjoying and carrying out these wondrous privileges, as a saint of God upon earth? To suppose that this is a hard question, and gendering bondage, would be to impeach the perfect goodness of God, as well as to fall into a snare of the devil. What God desires is that we should be blest yet more than we are. He would thus make us more happy. The epistle to the Philippians is one to fill the heart with joy, if there be an eye for Christ. He thanks his God for

them for their “fellowship with the gospel from the first day until now.” What going out of heart, and sustained vigour! It is not now “the fellowship of His Son,” as in 1 Corinthians, which indeed would be true of a Christian under any circumstances. So if Satan had contrived to turn a saint again to folly and sin, the Holy Ghost could remind him that God is faithful by whom he was called unto the fellowship of His Son. And can He have fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness? This is the reason why we should cry to God that, if He have called any to the fellowship of His Son, He would not allow the enemy to drag them into the dirt, but rouse their conscience to their grievous inconsistency.

But there is more. Here it is their fellowship with the gospel, not merely as a blessed message they had received themselves, but in its progress, conflicts, dangers, difficulties, etc. It does not necessarily mean preaching it, but, what was as good, or in itself even better — their hearts thoroughly in and with it. Need I hesitate to say that whatever may be the honour put upon those called to spread the gospel, to have a heart in unison with the gospel is a portion superior to any services as such? Most simply and heartily were the Philippians’ affections thus bound up with the gospel; they identified themselves first and last with its career. This was really fellowship with God in the spread of His own glad tidings through the world. The Apostle valued such hearts especially. Nothing less than the sustaining power of the Spirit of God had so wrought in these dear Philippians.

The way in which the gospel had reached them we hear in Acts 16. It began with Paul in prison, when his feet were in the stocks; yet withal, in the midst of shame and

pain, he and his companion singing praises to God at midnight! And here we have him, if alone, again a prisoner; and the praises of God are again heard — unwontedly in the great city of Rome. The Philippians were far away; but he could hear them, as it were none the less, singing praises to God, even as he was singing praises to God for them. It was the same blessed fellowship with the gospel that had characterized not him only, but them too, from the very first day until now.

But he goes further, and says, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will complete it against the day of Jesus Christ.” Remark the ground of his confidence. In the Corinthians it is because God was faithful. In Galatians, where there was a still a more serious trial, the Apostle says he was in doubt of them, till he thinks of the Lord; and then he has his heart lit up with a comforting hope that they were Christians after all. People that were practically slighting (little as they thought or intended it, yet virtually slighting) Christ for worldly elements — he could hardly understand how such could be Christians. To turn from a crucified and risen Christ to the rites of an earthly religion is worse than bare earthliness, destructive as this is. Here it is another thing. His confidence is grounded not merely on what God is in character and counsel, but on what he saw of Christ, by the Holy Ghost, in them. Thinking of what they had been and were then, could he hesitate to recognize the evident handiwork of God through His Son? He saw such an unequivocal enjoyment of Christ, and such an identification of interests with Him upon earth, that his confidence was not only in a general way that he would see them with Christ by-and-by, but in the solidity of the

work of God in them all the way through. He who had begun in them a good work, he was sure, would complete it unto (or, against) the day of Jesus Christ (v. 6).

“Even as it is meet” (or, “just”) “for me to think thus of you all, because ye have me in your heart.” v. 7. Such is the version given in the margin, which here prevents the right force of the verse. It was due to them, he means, not merely because he loved them, but he felt and had proof that they had him in their hearts. A blessed bond for hearts at all times is the name of Christ and His gospel. How continually, too, one finds the state of the saints accurately measured and set in evidence by the state of their affections toward anyone that is identified with the work of God on the earth! There will be the strongest possible attempt of Satan to bring an alienation of feeling and a turning of the saints against all such, whether absent or present. It was so in the days of the Apostle Paul; those who were simply cleaving to the Lord crave to him also. It was the very reverse of a mere fleshly feeling, which was sought by his adversaries who, flattering others, were flattered in turn. Paul was perfectly sensible that the more abundantly he loved, the less he was loved; and what a handle this gave to Satan to turn away the saints from the truth.

False teachers and men who may be really converted, but whose flesh is little judged, and whose worldliness is great, always seek to win persons as a party round themselves, by sparing the flesh and humouring the natural character, so as at last to have their own way without question. (2 Cor. 11:19, 20) The Apostle’s object was to win to Christ. But faithfulness called him often to

tread on what was painful to one and another. As long as love flowed freely and Christ was looked to, it was well; but when mortified feeling wrought, because they did not mortify their members on the earth, the tendency was constantly toward making parties, divisions, offences, the forerunners of yet worse evil. But if the Apostle was one who scorned such a thought as gathering a party round himself, these saints had him in their hearts.

He valued this love. How was it shown? “Inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace.” They were casting themselves, heart and soul, into the activities and sufferings of the grace of God in the Apostle. Did his bonds make them ashamed or suspicious? To have a friend in jail never was of good report. Did they begin to say in themselves, He must have been doing something wrong because he was a prisoner? On the contrary, seeing that the Apostle Paul had come into the deepest suffering, they looked upon it as the highest honour. If he had gone up to Jerusalem, it was not to spare himself; and though this visit may have been a mistake, certainly it was one of which no person ought to speak lightly. It was a thorough self-sacrifice every step of the way. The Apostle, though he was now as a consequence a prisoner in Rome, never yields to a spirit of regret, still less of repining, but regards all in the good hand of God as furthering the cause of Christ. Did not, for example, his own bonds turn to praise of God? There he was perfectly happy, perhaps never so happy as thus bound. The Philippian saints understood what it was to draw from the divine spring; and consequently their hearts were with him in joy as well as

sympathy. Did it weaken the Apostle's love for them personally? "God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." v. 8. Happiness as the Lord's prisoner dulled none of his warmest feelings of love toward them.

But besides all this, his love for them made him intensely solicitous about their real wants, and he turns to the Lord for them accordingly. "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment." v. 9. He wished that they should love (not less, but) with a fuller knowledge and an exercised intelligence. Love, or charity, is the basis, else there would be no building up; this being laid and abounding, full knowledge, instead of puffing up, guides and guards. The more the intelligence is, if it be real and spiritual, the greater the desire to grow in it. Those who do not see anything in Scripture as an object for constant search, and growth, and desire after more, are those, it is to be feared, who see scarce anything in it that is divine. Directly it is discerned that there is infinite light in it, desire to know more and more is a necessary consequence. But it is for practice. And this epistle shows us spiritual progress in the Apostle and in the saints more fully than any other, while it is the epistle that shows us the strongest desire after going on. This is what we know from experience. Whenever we begin to be satisfied with what we have got, there is an end of progress; but when we make a little real advance, we want to make more. Such was the case with these saints, who are prayed for therefore, "That ye may approve things that are excellent," etc. They needed to grow in intelligence, in order that they might be able to

judge of things, and so lay hold of what was more excellent.

“That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.” v. 10. Wonderful thought! The Apostle actually prays for these believers as if he conceived it possible that, growing in love and intelligence, they might walk the path of faith till the day of Christ without a single false step; Paul’s marvel, perhaps, would have been that we should count it wonderful. Alas! we know we fail day by day, because we are unspiritual. Why do we let out a vain word or show a wrong feeling? Because we are not realizing the presence and the grace of God. No progress in the things of God will ever keep a person — nothing but actual nearness to Him and dependence on Him. What is a Christian, and what the condition and experience which Scripture recognizes for him here below? He is by grace brought, in virtue of Christ’s blood, into the presence of God; who has a power within him, the Holy Ghost, and a power without to lean upon, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and this uninterruptedly and always. Such is the theory; but what is the practice? As far as it is realized, the path is without a single stumble. And let us remember that such is the only sanctioned path for all saints. It belongs not of right to some advanced souls. It is what every Christian has to desire. We can, therefore, readily understand how souls, hearing such thoughts as these, should embrace the idea of a state of perfection. But though the scheme is erroneous and utterly short of our true standard in the second Man, the last Adam, a Christian ought never contentedly to settle down in the thought that he must fail and sin day by day. What is this but calm acquiescence with dishonouring Christ? If we do fail, let

us at least always say, It was our own fault, our own unwatchfulness, through not making use of the grace and strength we have in Christ. The treasure there is open for us, and we have only to draw upon it; and the effect is a staid, calm, spiritual progress, the flesh judged, the heart overflowing with happiness in Christ, the path without a stumble till the day of Christ.

More than this, let it be remarked, he prays that they might be filled with the fruit of righteousness, not merely such and such righteous acts in detail, but the blessed product of righteousness by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God (v. 11). There is no thought of, nor room for, imposing the law here, which is rather shut out from being the proper standard for the Christian. There is another, who is both our new object and our rule, even Christ Himself, the image of God, the life and power of fruit bearing for the believer. What a rule for our practical, everyday walk!

From the introduction, which bears ample witness of the Apostle’s love in the Spirit to the Philippian saints of his confidence in them and his earnest desire for them, we enter on the first great topic on which he writes — his own condition at Rome. He felt that it was needful to lay it before them in the light of the Lord, not merely because of their affectionate solicitude, not only again because of evil workers, who would gladly make it a handle against himself and his ministry; but chiefly with the holy and loving end of turning it to their profit and even their establishment in the truth and diligence in the work and singleness of purpose in cleaving to the Lord.

Indeed the Apostle had every ground to expect a blessing through that which Satan was perverting to injure souls. It had already issued in good fruit as regarded the work of the gospel; and he looks for just as good fruit as to all that concerned himself, either in the present or in the future, whether by life or by death. Such is the confidence and joy of faith. It overcomes the world; it realizes Christ's victory over the enemy. What can man, what can Satan, do with one who is careful about nothing, but in everything gives thanks? What can either avail to disconcert one whose comfort is in God and who interprets all circumstances by His love, with unshaken reliance on His wisdom and goodness?

Such a one was the Apostle, who now proceeds to turn for the salvation of the saints at Philippi, so tenderly loved, what the malice of Satan and of his instruments would be sure to catch at greedily as a means of alarming some and stumbling others, as if God too cared not for His Church or His servant. It is experience we have unfolded rather than doctrine; it is the rich, and mellow, and mature fruit of the Spirit in the Apostle's own heart as he expounds to them the facts of his own daily life according to God. What a privilege to hear! and how sweet to know that it was not written merely, nor as much, to inform us of him as to conform the saints practically to Christ thereby! Blessedly as the lesson was learned in the bonds that lay upon Paul, for our sakes, no doubt, it has been written. Therefore was the Apostle inspired. Inspiration, however, does not exclude the heart's holy feelings.

"But I wish you to know, brethren, that my condition (literally, what concerns me) has turned out rather (that is, rather than otherwise) unto the furtherance of the

gospel; so that my bonds have become manifest in Christ in the whole praetorium and to all the rest." vv. 12, 13. The devil had hoped to merge the Apostle in the common crowd of criminals; but God, ever watchful for good, made it plain that His servant was a prisoner for no moral offence, but because of Christ. Thus the enemy's cunning device had ended in a testimony for the Saviour, and the gospel penetrated where before it was wholly unknown. His bonds were manifestly in Christ's cause. The grace of Christ was made known, and His servant was vindicated.

But this was not all. For as the Apostle tells them further, "Most of the brethren in the Lord, having confidence in my bonds, dare more abundantly to speak the word without fear." v. 14. Here was another step in the blessing, and of rich promise too. How unexpected of the enemy! He, however, was on the alert; and if he could not silence the tongues that bore their testimony to the Saviour, would not fail to bring in mixed motives and tempt some to an unhallowed spirit and aim, even in a work so holy. It was not undiscerned of the Apostle; neither did it disturb in the least his triumphant assurance that all things were working together for good, not only to them that love God, but to the advance of the glad tidings of His grace; so this too he does not hide in sorrow or shame, but cheerfully explains. "Some indeed also on account of envy and strife, but some also on account of goodwill, preach the Christ; these indeed out of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel; but those out of contention, proclaim the Christ, not purely, supposing to stir up tribulation for my bonds." vv. 15-17.

The truth is that the Apostle was then and there in the happiest enjoyment of that truth which, not so long before, he had held before the saints at Rome. He was glorying in tribulations by the way, as well as in the hope of God's glory at the end; and not only so, but glorying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1, 2, 11). His bonds but proved how entirely the liberty of grace is independent of all that man or Satan can rage against him who stands fast in it and has Him before his heart, by whom alone it came and could be given. There was no blindness to the feelings of some whose zeal in no way concealed their malevolent desires; but nothing weakened the spring of his joy in God, nor his thankful perception that, whatever man meant, the testimony of grace was going out widely and energetically; and Christ was held up and exalted more and more. For it was no question here of doctrine; there is no ground to think that even the contentious men did not preach soundly. It was the good that God intended that occupied Paul's thoughts, whatever might be in theirs. Hence he breaks forth in that blessed expression of an unselfish, full heart, "What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice, yea and will rejoice." v. 18. How happy is the simplicity, how deep the wisdom of faith, which thus sees in everything, even where flesh intrudes into the Lord's work, the defeat of Satan! What a present blessing to his soul who, thus delivered from self-confidence on the one hand and anxiety on the other, sees the sure, steady, onward working of God for the glory of Christ, even as by-and-by when Christ is displayed in His kingdom, all will be ordered to the glory of God the Father! (Phil. 2) Hence in the consciousness of the progress of gospel testimony and his own blessing

through all that to which his imprisonment had given occasion, the Apostle can say, “I know that this will turn to my 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.” vv. 19, 20. Imprisoned, he could not separate himself from the mighty conflict which was on foot in the world; he knew victory was assured, however hotly the enemy might contest. Salvation here means the final defeat of the enemy, and so it is throughout our epistle, never a past thing as in Ephesians 2 and 2 Timothy 1:9, but always future, as in 2 Timothy 2 and 2 Timothy 3, manifestly. In Philippians, as in Hebrews, etc., it is the full deliverance at the close. Both views are true, and each has its own importance.

We have seen the expectation and hope of the Apostle, that in nothing he should be ashamed, but in all boldness as always, now also Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. His eye was thus on Christ, not for the beginning and the end only, but all the way. In the next verse, 21, he proceeds to vindicate the confidence of his heart. For, says he, “to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.” To be spiritually minded, the Apostle tells us elsewhere, is life and peace. Here, speaking of his own daily practice, he shows he had but one aim, motive, object, and business — Christ. And this was said, not at the start of his career, in the overwhelming sense of the Saviour’s grace to His proud and self-righteous persecutor, but after long years of unequalled toil, peril, affliction without and sorrows within the Church. “To me to live is Christ.” No doubt,

the principle was true from the beginning of his eventful life as a Christian. Still, as little do I doubt that it was emphatically and more than ever verified at the very time he was writing, a prisoner in the imperial city.

It is remarkable to what debates and difficulties the verse has given occasion, though the language is plain, the construction unambiguous, and sense as weighty as it is clear. “Interpreters [says a famous man] have hitherto, in my opinion, given a wrong rendering and exposition to this passage; for they mane this distinction, that Christ was life to Paul and death was gain.” Certainly this is not the meaning of the Holy Ghost who gave the Apostle to say that to him to live (that is, here below) is Christ and to die gain. That Christ was his life is most true, and is the doctrine of Galatians and Colossians in passages full of beauty and interest. (See Gal. 2; Col. 3.) But here it is no question of doctrine, standing, or life in Christ. The whole matter is the character of his living day by day; and this he declares is “Christ,” even as the ceasing to live or to die, he says, would be “gain.” And what does this writer substitute? “I, on the other hand, make Christ the subject of discourse in both clauses, so that He is declared to be gain to him both in life and in death; for it is customary with the Greeks to leave the word pros to be understood. Besides that this meaning is less forced, it also corresponds better with the foregoing statement, and contains more complete doctrine. He declares that it is indifferent to him whether he lives or dies, because, having Christ, he reckons both to be gain. So Calvin, followed by Beza, who adds that “Christ” is the subject of both members and “gain” the predicate, and that the ellipse of kata is not only tolerable but an Atticism! The

reader may rest assured that a more vicious and violent rendering has rarely been offered. The truth is that “to live” is the subject, “Christ” the predicate of the first proposition; “to die” is the subject, “gain” the predicate of the second, as in the authorized version. The real force is lost by this strange dislocation of the French reformers, and the true connection is broken.

“For me to live is Christ and to die gain; but if to live in flesh is before me, this to me is worth the while; and what I shall choose, I know not, but I am pressed by the two, having the desire for departing and being with Christ, for it is far better, but to continue in the flesh is more needful for you. And having confidence of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in your faith, that your boast may abound in Christ Jesus through me by my presence again with you.” vv. 21-26. Thus the Apostle compares his continuance in life with dying; the former were to him worth while, and what to choose he could not say. Thus there was perplexity from the two things; for he certainly had the desire to slip all that anchored him here and to be with Christ; whereas, on the other hand, he felt that his abiding here would be more necessary on account of the saints. This is no sooner fairly before him than all is clear. There is no more pressure from two sides. He is confident; he knows he will remain and stay with them all for their progress and joy in their faith. How sweet and disinterested is the love which the Holy Ghost gives to the heart that is centred on Christ! Their spiritual interest turns the scale, whatever his personal desire.

Sure I am that we have most of us lost much by failing to realize that to us too this path is open, and that it is the

will of our God concerning us. Too little are any of us conscious of the weakening, darkening, deadening effect on our spiritual experience of allowing any object or desire but Christ. How often, for instance, it seems to be taken for granted that a brief season after conversion is not only the due time for first love, but the only time when it is to be expected! In what bright contrast with all such thoughts stands the record we have read of the blessed Apostle's experience! Was it not meant for the Philippians? Is it not also for us? God never intimates in His Word that the saint must droop after conversion; that love, zeal, simplicity of faith must become increasingly poorer and weaker. There are dangers no doubt; but early days have theirs as well as later, and much passes muster at first through lack of spirituality. Where there is full purpose of heart in cleaving to the Lord, He gives, on the contrary, a deepening acquaintance with Himself. It is not, To me to live is for the gospel or even the Church, but, "To me to live is Christ." To have Him as the one absorbing, governing motive of the life, day by day, is the strength as well as test of all that is of God; it gives, as nothing else can give, everything its divine place and proportion. "To me to live is Christ" seems to me much more than to say, "To die is gain." For this is true of many a saint's experience, who could hardly say that. Yet there is not a clause more characteristic; it is the very pith of our epistle. Christian experience is the point. In Philippians, above all others, it is the development of the great problem, how we are to live Christ. As for Paul, it was the one thing he did; and so death, which naturally threatens the loss of this and that and all things, he, on the contrary, realized to be gain. This is the truth, and he enjoyed it.

For years the Apostle, a prisoner, had death before him as a not improbable contingency. Yet assuredly his eye is only the brighter, his strength not abated, but grown, his exercised acquaintance with God, His will and ways, larger than ever. Hence, instead of his thinking it was a question for the emperor to determine, he sees, feels, and speaks as if God had put it all into his own hands; just as in another chapter he says, “I can do all things through Christ (or Him) who strengthens me.” Here you have him sitting in judgment on the point whether he is to live or die. He drops Caesar altogether and views it as if God were asking His servant whether he was going to live or die. His answer is that it would be much better for himself to die, but that for the sake of the Church it would be expedient for him to live somewhat longer. Thus the decision of the question is eminently Christlike, against his own strong desire, because his eye was single, and he sacrificed self for the good of the Church. Accordingly he concludes, with wonderful faith and unselfishness, that he is going to live.

“I am in a strait between the two, having the desire for departing and being with Christ, which is very far better: nevertheless to continue in the flesh is more needful for you.” Inasmuch as in his heart Christ thus predominated, who certainly was not balancing questions about his own gain, but other people’s good; so Paul, therefore, thinks of and in His mind and says, “Having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith: that your boast may be more abundant in Jesus Christ through me by my presence with you again.” I do not know a more astonishing and instructive proof of the power of the Spirit of God, in giving a man fellowship

practically with God. The flesh being broken and judged in him, he could enter into the mind and feelings of God, and Christ's heart about the Church. Was it really desirable for the Church that Paul should abide? Then, without hesitation and without fleshly feeling, he can say, Paul will abide. Thus he settles the matter and speaks calmly and confidently of seeing them again. Yet is it a man in prison, exposed to the most reckless of Roman emperors, who thinks, decides, says all this!

At the same time he adds, "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for (or rather with) the faith of the gospel." His heart's desire, when he came and saw them again, was to see them all unitedly happy, and not only this flowing in of Christ, but such a flowing out of Him that their hearts should be free to spread the knowledge of the gospel everywhere.

Next, he wished to hear that they were frightened in nothing by the adversaries, which is to them a proof of destruction, but "of your salvation, and this from God, because unto you is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." From this scripture it is evidently of great moment spiritually that we should keep up in our souls good courage in face of the foe, and confidence in God, not only for our own sake, but for others. There is no testimony more gracious, nor more solemn to our adversaries. But how blessed to know that the day comes when, if we are walking with God, every opposer, no matter how proud, will disappear; when all the malice, and wiles, and power that can be brought to put

the saints down will only elicit the power of God in their favour! Faith knows all the power of God is its own before that day comes.

It is of the greatest importance that we should cherish calm, and lowly, and patient confidence in God, and that the heart should rest in His love; but this can never be, unless there be present subjection to Christ and enjoyment of what He is toward our souls. To their adversaries this boldness was a demonstration of perdition, as well as of their own final triumph over all that Satan could aim at their hurt. God intended this, because it was given them in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Paul, who was suffering for Christ's sake at that very moment, was thoroughly happy in it, and commends the place to them. It was a good gift of grace; he could say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places," though he was a prisoner. They had the same conflict as they saw in him when a prisoner at Philippi and now heard of in Rome. May our own souls prize this blessed place, if the Lord vouchsafe it in any measure to us!

Philippians 2

We saw in chapter 1 how refreshing to the Apostle was the state of the Philippians, looked at as a whole; for, undoubtedly, there was that which needed correction in particular cases. Still their practical condition, and more especially as shown in the fellowship of the gospel, drew out powerfully his affections to them, as indeed their own were drawn out. Now this very fellowship bore witness to the healthful and fervent state of their souls toward the Lord, His workmen, and His work. For fellowship with the gospel is a great deal more than

merely helping on the conversion of souls. Babes that are just born to God, souls that have made ever so little progress in the truth, are capable of feeling strong sympathy with the calling in of the lost, with the glad tidings flowing out to souls, with the joy of newly quickened and pardoned souls brought to the knowledge of Christ. But there was much more implied in the Philippians' "fellowship with the gospel." It is plain that the bent and strength of their whole life was that of persons who thoroughly identified themselves with its conflicts and sorrows as well as its joys. There was nothing in them so to arrest and occupy the Spirit of God, that they could not be in the very same current with Himself, in the magnifying of Christ and the blessing of souls.

And thus it was that they were privileged to have fellowship with the Apostle himself. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." All these things had been in action, and the Apostle viewed each little offering to him, while he was in prison for the gospel's sake, in the light of Christ's holy, spiritual affections which had dictated it. In the case of the Philippians, it would appear that it was not merely the way in which the grace of God values the service of the saints. He interpreted it, not according to the thoughts of the saints, but according to His own, seeing, therefore, far deeper value in it than the human spirit had which had been led of the Holy Ghost in the service.

Take, for instance, Mary in the gospels, and the way in which the blessed Saviour viewed her act of devotedness

in spending upon His Person the box of precious ointment which she had reserved for that time Where there is singleness of eye, there is One guiding the saints, though they may not know it distinctly. There is no ground to suppose Mary distinctly appreciated that she was anointing the Lord for His burial; but His divine grace gave it that value. The love that was in her heart felt instinctively that some awful danger threatened Him; that a heavy dark cloud was gathering over Him, which others feebly, if at all, entered into. In truth, God was in this intuition of divine affection.

But you may see something, perhaps, analogous in the providential care which God by times exercises; and there is even more than providence in the care of a Christian parent with a child. There is a feeling of undefined but real uneasiness — the Spirit of God giving a certain consciousness of peril — and this often calls forth the affection of the parents to the child in such sort as to avert the imminent danger or alleviate the sufferings in the highest degree. In a still higher sense this was true in the dealings of God with Mary. Alas! little indeed were the disciples in the secret, though they ought to have known what was impending more than any others, had it been a question of familiar intercourse and knowledge.

Certainly they had larger opportunities than ever Mary enjoyed; but it is far from being such knowledge that gives the deepest insight — far from being earthly circumstances that account for the insight of love. There is a cause which lies deeper still — the power of the Spirit of God acting in a simple, upright, loving heart, that feels intensely for the object of its reverence, for Christ Himself. If our eye is to our Lord, we may be sure

that He will work with and in us as well as for us. He will not fail to give us the opportunity for serving Him in the most fitting manner and at the right moment. Mary had this box we know not how long; but there was One who loved Mary, and who wished to vouchsafe her the desired privilege of showing her love to His Son. He it was who led Mary (despised as indifferent by her believing but bustling sister) at this very time to bring out her love. Thus, besides ordinary intelligent guidance, there may be guidance under the skilful hands of Him who cares for us, and now acts yet more intimately by His Spirit dwelling in us.

In the case of the Philippians, there was the conscious fellowship of the Spirit; there was remarkable devotedness and spirituality among them, so that God could put particular honour upon them. In this respect they are in striking contrast not only with the Galatians but with the Corinthians also. Not that but these two were born of God; there was no difference in this. We are expressly told the Corinthians were called into the fellowship of the Son of God; such they were as truly as the Philippians were. It is of them that the Holy Ghost says, “God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” But there was a mighty difference here. There was not the same fellowship with the gospel among the Corinthians, and therefore it may be that the Apostle desires that they might have “the communion of the Holy Ghost” (2 Cor. 13:14). Assuredly till then it had been enjoyed by them scantily. (Compare 1 Cor. 3; 4; etc.)

But in looking at the Philippians he could say, “If there be therefore any consolation [or rather encouragement] in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the

Spirit," etc. There was all this practical display of Christ so fully at work among them; such tenderness in their spirit, such entering into the mind of God touching the mighty conflict in which the Apostle was engaged, that they identified themselves heart and soul with the Apostle He says, therefore, If there be all this (which he doubted not but assumed), "fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Here was their failure; they were not sufficiently of one mind; nor were they cherishing, as they should, the same love. Hence there was a measure of dissension among them at this time. True, it may seem to have been about the work of the Lord, in which they were truly zealous. Sorrowful as this was in itself, still this was not so low and unworthy as mere squabbling with one another, such as we hear of among the Corinthians. Not that it was to be treated lightly, but even the very failure and the cause of it proved that they were in a more spiritual state than the Corinthians.

In the same way you may find among the children of God now that which answers to the trial of an Abraham or of a Lot. Just Lot, dwelling among the wicked in the cities of the plain, was vexed from day to day with their unrighteous and ungodly deeds. What unbridled wickedness filled the scene which first attracted his too covetous eyes! Strange that a saint could find his home there for a season! Abraham failed, no doubt; but what a contrast even between the failure of an Abraham and of a Lot! When the latter, through unwatchfulness, fell into a sin which led the way to worse, it was not only a painful blot, but the consequences of it remained for ages to be adversaries to the people of God. Out of the miserable circumstances which closed his life, we see a

shameful result and a constant affliction. Indeed the Israel of God will prove it yet in the latter days. On the other hand, Abraham had his trials and failures, and surely the Lord did notice and rebuke them in His righteous government. But though this shows that there is nothing worthy of God in man, that no good thing dwells in the natural man, even of a saint, that the flesh is fleshly, let it be in whom it may; yet, for all that, the character of Abraham's very slips and unfaithfulness tells us that he was in a spiritual condition wholly different from his nephew Lot.

Just so it was, in measure, with the Corinthians and the Philippians. In the latter there was a want of unity, of judgment, and mind, but they were filled with the fervour of the Spirit; they were carried out in earnest wishes for the gospel and the good of God's people. Thus, even where you find the service of the Lord the prominent thought, there is always room for the flesh to act. There is nothing like having Christ Himself for our object. This was what Paul knew and lived in, and wished them to know better. Service brings in room for the human mind and feelings and energy. We are in danger of being occupied unduly with that which we do or what we suffer. Behind it lurks also the dangers of comparison, and so of envy, self-seeking, and strife. How blessedly the Apostle in Philippians 1 laid before them his feeling in presence of a far deeper, wider and more painful experience, we have seen already. It appears there was something of this kind at worn among the Philippians. Accordingly he here intimates to them that there was something necessary to complete his joy. He would see them of the same mind, and this by having not the same notions but the same love, with union of soul

minding one thing. His own spirit was enjoying Christ increasingly. The earth, and man upon it, was a very little thing before his eyes; the thoughts of heaven were everything to him, so that he could say, “To me to live is Christ.” This made his heart sensitive on their account, because there was something short of Christ, some objects besides Him in them. He desires fullness of joy in them.

The Spirit of God gives hearts, purified by faith, a common object, even Christ. What he had known in them made him the more alive to that which was defective in these saints. He therefore makes a great deal of what he might have withheld if writing to others. In an assembly where there was much that dishonoured God, it would be useless to notice every detail. Wisdom would apply the grace of Christ to the overwhelming evils that met one’s eye; lesser things would remain to be disposed of afterward by the same power. But in writing to saints in a comparatively good state, even a little speck assumes importance in the mind of the Spirit. There was something they might do or remedy to fill the cup of the Apostle’s joy. How gladly he would hear that they shone in unity of spirit! He owned and felt their love; would that they cultivated the same mutually! How could they be more like-minded? If the mind were set upon one thing, they would all have the same mind. God has one object for His saints, and that object is Christ. With Paul, every aim, every duty was subordinate to Him; as it is said in the next chapter, “this one thing I do”; so here he wished to produce this one, common mind in the Philippian saints.

He then touches on that which they had to watch against. “Let nothing be done through strife or

vainglory." It is humbling, but too true, that the principle of the grossest evil outside works even among the saints of God. The traces might be so faint that none but an apostle's eye could perceive them. But God enabled His servant to discern in them what was not of Christ. Hence he sets before them the dangers alike of opposing one another and of exalting self, strife, and vainglory. Oh! how apt they are to creep in and sully the service of God! The chapter before had shown some elsewhere taking advantage of the Apostle's bonds to preach Christ of envy and strife. And there he had triumphed by faith and could rejoice that, any how, Christ was preached. Now he warns the beloved Philippians against something similar in their midst. The principle was there, and he does not fail to lay it upon their heart.

How is the spirit of opposition and self-exaltation to be overcome? "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." What a blessed thought! and how evidently divine! How could strife or vainglory exist along with it? When one thinks of self, God would have one to feel our own amazing shortcomings. To have such sweet and heavenly privileges in Christ, to be loved by Him, and yet to make such paltry returns as even our hearts know to be altogether unworthy of Him, is our bitter experience as to ourselves. Whereas when we look at another, we can readily feel not only how blessedly Christ is for him, and how faithful is His goodness, but love leads us to cover failings, to see and keep before us that which is lovely and of good report in the saints — if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, to think on these things. This appears to lie at the root of the exhortation, and it is evident that it thus becomes a

simple and happy duty. “In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

In short, it is made good on the one hand by the consciousness of our own blessing through grace in presence of our miserable answer to it in heart and way; and on the other hand, by the thankful discernment of another beheld as the object of the Lord’s tender love and all its fruits, without the thought of drawbacks. Of their evil the Lord would not have us to think, but of what Christ is to and in them. For here there is no question of discipline, but of the ordinary, happy state of God’s children. Certainly the Philippian assembly consisted of men who were full of simple-hearted earnestness in pushing out the frontiers of Christ’s kingdom and whose hearts were rejoicing in Him. But toward one another there was the need of greater tenderness.

Besides, if one more than others was abused everywhere, it was the Apostle Paul. He was pre-eminently treated as the off-scouring of all things. All Asia was turned away from him. Where was there a man to identify himself with his cause? Evidently this was the result of a faithful, self-denying, holy course in the gospel, which from time to time offended hundreds even of the children of God. He could not but touch the worldliness of one, the flesh of another. Above all, he roused the judaizers on one hand, and on the other all schismatics, heretics, etc. All this makes a man dreaded and disliked; and none ever knew more of this bitter trial than the Apostle Paul. But in the case of the Philippians there was the contrary effect. Their hearts crave to him so much the more in the hour of his imprisonment at Rome, when there was this far sorer

sorrow of an amazing alienation on the part of many who had been blessed through his means. This faithful love of the Philippians could not but rejoice the Apostle's heart.

It is one thing to indulge a fleshly dependence upon an instrument of God, quite another to have the same interests with him, so as to be knit more closely than ever in the time of sorrow. This was fellowship indeed, as far as it went; and it did go far, but not so far as the Apostle desired for them. He thought of their things, not of his merely; and accordingly, he now gives them another word: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." If they loved him so much, why not love each other more than they did? Why so occupied with their own thoughts?

This egotism was another fertile source of evil. We all know that we are apt to value qualities which we possess ourselves and to slight those of others. This is unjudged nature; for, where there is power of love, it works in a direction quite the contrary. There would be the consciousness of how weak and unworthy we are, and the little use we make of what God gives us; there would be the valuing of what we see in another, that we have not got ourselves. How good for the Church to have all this and far more!

There he brings in what is the great secret of deliverance from all these strivings of potsherd nature — "the mind that was in Christ Jesus" (v. 5). In this chapter you will observe it is Christ as He was; in the next it is Christ as He is. Here it is Christ coming down, though of course He is thereon exalted. The point pressed is that we should look at the mind of Christ that

was displayed in Him while here below. In Philippians 3 it is not so much the mind or moral purpose that was in Him, as it is His Person as an object, a glorious, attractive object now in heaven, the prize for which he was running, Christ Himself above, the kernel of all his joy. Here (Phil. 2) it is the unselfish mind of love that seeks nothing of its own, but the good of others at all costs; this is the mind that was in Christ.

The Apostle proceeds to enforce lowliness in love, by setting the way of the Lord Himself before their eyes. This is the true "rule of life" for the believer since His manifestation; not even all the written Word alone, but that Word seen livingly in Christ, who is made a spring of power by the Holy Ghost to his soul that is occupied with Him. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal [on equality] with God; but made himself of no reputation [emptied himself]," etc. vv. 5-7.

What an illustrious testimony to the true, proper, intrinsic deity of Christ! It is all the stronger because, like many more, it is indirect. Who but a person consciously God in the highest sense could adopt not merely the unhesitating assumption of such language as "Before Abraham was, I am," or, "I and my Father are one," but the no less real, though hidden, claim to Godhead which lies under the very words which unbelief so eagerly seizes against Him? Where would be the sense of any other man (and man He surely was and is) saying, "My Father is greater than I"? A strange piece of information in the mouth (I will not say of a Socrates or a Bacon merely, but) of a Moses or a Daniel, a Peter or a Paul; but in Him, how suitable and even needful, yet only so because He was truly God and equal with the Father,

as He was man, the sent One, and so the Father was greater than He! Take again that striking declaration in John 17:3, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Of course He was man, He deigned to be born of woman, else unbelief would have no ground of argument on that score. But what mere man ever dared, save the vilest imposter, calmly to class himself with God, yea, to speak of the knowledge of the only true God, and of Him, as life everlasting?

So again, the scripture before us. Nothing can be conceived more conclusively to prove His own supremely divine glory than the simple statement of the text. Gabriel, yea, the archangel Michael, has no higher dignity than that of being God’s servant, in the sphere assigned to each. The Son of God alone had to empty Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. All others were, at best, God’s servants; and nothing could increase that dignity for them or lift them above it. Of Christ alone it was true, that He took a bondservant’s form; and of Him alone could it be true, because He was in the form of God. In this nature He subsisted originally, as truly as He received a bondman’s; both were real, equally real — the one intrinsic, the other that which He condescended to assume in infinite grace.

Nor was this all. When “found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” v. 8. This is another distinct step in His descent of grace to glorify God. First, it was humiliation for Him to become a servant and a man; next, being man, He humbled Himself as far as death in His obedience (the blessed converse of Adam’s

disobedience unto death). And that death was the extreme of human shame, besides its atoning character. Yet must we carefully bear in mind that it would be as impossible for a divine person to cease to be God, as for a man to become a divine person. But it was the joy and triumph of divine grace that He who was God, equally with the Father, when about to become a man, did not carry down the glory and power of the Godhead to confound man before Him, but rather emptied Himself; contrariwise perfection morally was seen in this. Thus He was thoroughly the dependent man, not once falling into self-reliance, but under all circumstances, and in the face of the utmost difficulties, the very fullest pattern and exhibition of One who waited upon God, who set the Lord always before Him, who never acted from Himself, but whose meat and drink it was to do the will of His Father in heaven; in a word, He became a perfect servant. This is what we have here.

Christ is said to have been in the form of God; that is, it was not in mere appearance, but it had that form, and not a creature's. The form of God means that He has His and no other form. He was then in that nature of being, and nothing else; He had no creature being whatever; He was simply and solely God the Son. He, subsisting in this condition, did not think it robbery to be equal with God. He was God; yet, in the place of man which He truly entered, He had, as was meet, the willingness to be nothing. He made Himself of no reputation. How admirable! How magnifying to God! He put in abeyance all His glory. It was not even in angelic majesty that He deigned to become a servant, but in the likeness of men. Here we have the form of a servant as well as the form of God, but that does not in anywise mean that He was

not really both. In truth, as He was very God, so He became the veriest servant that God or man ever saw.

But we may go yet further. “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Mark that. There are two great stages in the advent and humiliation of the Son of God. The first is in respect of His divine nature or proper deity; He emptied Himself. He would not act on a ground which exempted Him from human obedience, when He takes the place of a servant here below. Indeed, we may say that He would act upon what God the Father was to Him, not upon what He the Son was to the Father. On the one hand, though He were a Son, He learned obedience through the things that He suffered. On the other, if He had not been a divine person — the Son no doubt — He would not have been the perfect man that He was. But He walks on through unheard-of shame, sorrow, and suffering, as one that sought only the will and glory of His Father in everything. He would choose nothing, not even in saving sinners or receiving a soul (John 6). He would act in nothing apart from the Father. He would have only those whom the Father draws. Whom the Father gives Him, whoever comes to Him, He welcomes them; He will in no wise cast any out, be they ever so bad. What a proof that He is thoroughly the servant, when He, the Saviour, absolutely puts aside all choice of those He will save! When acting as Lord with His apostles, He tells us that He chose; but in the question of salvation, He virtually says, Here I am, a Saviour; and whoever is drawn to Me by the Father, that is enough for Me; whoever comes, I will save. No matter who or what it was, you have in the Lord Jesus this perfect subjection and self-abnegation,

and this too in the only person that never had a will to sin, whose will cared not for its own way in anything. He was the only man that never used His own will; His will as man was unreservedly in subjection to God. But we find another thing: if He emptied Himself of His deity,1 when He took the form of a servant, when He does become a man, He humbles Himself and becomes obedient as far as death.

This is important because it shows, among others things, this also, that death was not the natural portion of our Lord as man, but that to which, when found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient. There was no death for Him merely as man, for death was the wages of sin, not of man as such without sin, still less of the Holy One of God. How could He come under death? In this was the contrast between Him and the first Adam. The first Adam became disobedient unto death; Christ, on the contrary, obeyed unto death. No other was competent so to lay down His life. Sinners had none to give; life was due to God, and they had no title to offer it. It would have been sin to have pretended to it. But in Christ all is reversed. His death in a world of sin is His glory — not only perfect grace, but the vindication of God in all His character. “I have power,” He says, “to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” In the laying down of His life, He was accomplishing the glory of God. “Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him.’’ So while God was pleased with and exalted in every step of the Lord Jesus Christ’s life, yet the deepest moral glory of God shines out in His death. Never was nor could be such obedience before or in any other. He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

In this chapter it is not a question of putting away sin. It is ignorance of the mind of God to confine the death of Christ, even to that astonishing part of it, while fully admitting that there is not, nor ever will be, anything to compare with it. But the death of Christ, for instance, takes in the reconciliation of all things, as well as the bringing us who believe unto God; for now that the world is fallen under vanity, without that death there could not be the righteous gathering up again out of the ruin that which is manifestly marred and spoiled by the power of Satan. Again, where without it was the perfect display of what God is? Where else the utmost extent of Christ's suffering and humiliation, and obedience in them? The truth, love, holiness, wisdom, and majesty of God were all to the fullest degree vindicated in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not a single feature of God but what, though it expresses itself elsewhere in Christ, finds its richest and most complete answer in His death. Here it is the perfect servant, who would not stop short at any one thing, and this not merely in the truest love to us, but absolutely for the glory of God. It is in this point of view that His death is referred to here; and the Spirit of God adds (vv. 9, 10), "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at [in virtue of] the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly, and earthly, and infernal [ones]."

It is not merely a question of saints or of Israel, but "every knee shall bow," etc. This takes in angels and saints, and even those who are forever under the judgment of God, for to "under the earth" attaches the worst possible sense. Thus the infernal beings, the lost, come in here; the verse includes those that have

rejected salvation, no less than those who confess the Saviour. It is the universal subjection of all to Christ. Jesus has won the title even as man. If unbelievers despised Him as man, as Son of man He will judge them. As man they must bow to Him. The lowly name that was His as Nazarene on the earth must be honoured everywhere; God's glory is concerned in it. In the name of Jesus or in virtue of His name, "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." v. 11.

It is not, again, a question of His being Son (which of course He was from all eternity), but Lord also. We know that the spirit of this is true for the believer now. Every soul that is now born of God bows his knee in virtue of the name of Jesus, and to Jesus. The Christian now confesses by the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ is Lord; but this homage will be made good to an incomparably larger extent by and by. But then it will be too late for salvation. It is now received by faith which finds blessedness and eternal life in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Neither is there any man that confesses Him to be the Lord by the Holy Ghost but a saved person. But there will be more than this by and by. When the day of grace is past and God is not merely gathering out an elect body, the Church, but putting down all opposing authority, then the name of Jesus will be throughout the universe owned even by those who do it by compulsion, and who by that very acknowledgment confess their own eternal misery.

In Ephesians 1:10 we are told of God's purpose for the dispensation of the fullness of times to "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." There is not a word, it has often

been remarked, about things under the earth, because there it is not a question of universal compulsory acknowledgment of Christ even by the devils and the lost, but very simply of all things being put under the headship of Christ. Neither lost men nor devils will ever stand in any such relation to Christ. He will surely judge them both. In Ephesians it is Christ viewed as the head of the whole creation of God, all things heavenly and earthly being summed up under His administration. Besides that, He is the head of the Church, which consequently shares His place of exaltation over all things heavenly and earthly, as being the bride of the true and last Adam. “He has made Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” Christ fills all in all; but the Church is that which fills up the mystic, glorified man, just as Eve was necessary to the completeness of God’s thoughts as to the first Adam.

The Church is the bride, the Lamb’s wife. This mystery is great and largely treated in Ephesians; but it is not the subject of our epistle, where the aim is practical, enforced from One who came down from infinite glory and made Himself nothing, and who now is exalted and made Lord of all, so that every creature must bow. This is put before the Philippians as the most powerful of motives and weightiest of examples for self-abnegation, in love, to God’s glory.

As a whole, we have seen that the state of the Philippian saints was good and healthy. It was not with them as with the Galatians, over whose speedy lapse into error — and what error it was! — the Apostle had to marvel and mourn. And as in doctrine, so in practice, what a change for the worse! Their love, once excessive one

might say, was turned into bitterness and contempt, as the sweetest thing in nature, if soured, becomes the sourest of all. “Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you that ye might affect them.” Gal. 4:13-17. “But,” adds the Apostle, with cutting severity, “it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.”

What a refreshing contrast was the condition of the Philippians! It was not only that their love was true and fervent, proving their fellowship with the gospel and their hearty sympathy with those engaged in its labours and sufferings; but their faithfulness shone out yet more when the Apostle was not in their midst. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence....” What reserve in his tone to the one, and what opening of affections, heartily expressed, to the other! And no wonder. In Galatia, Christ was shaded under nature; religion it might be, but unsubject to God, aye, and unloving too, in spite of vain talk about love. In Philippi, Christ was increasingly the object; love was in true and wholesome exercise; and obedience grew firmly, because liberty and responsibility were happily realized,

even the more in the absence of the Apostle and without his immediate help.

Accordingly he exhorts them thus: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both the willing and the working of [according to] his good pleasure.” In Ephesians 2, the saints are viewed as seated together in heavenly places in Christ; they are regarded here as working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. How can we put these two things together? With perfect ease, if we are simply subject to the Word of God.

If you try to make out that there is only one meaning of salvation in the New Testament, you are in a difficulty indeed; and you will find that there is no possibility of making the passages square. In fact, nothing is more certain and easy to ascertain, than that salvation in the New Testament is more frequently spoken of as a process incomplete as yet, a thing not finished, than as a completed end. It is not then a question of taking away something, but of getting a further idea. Take Romans 13:11, 12, for instance. There we find salvation spoken of as not yet arrived. “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” From the context we find that it is connected with “tint day” being at hand; so the salvation spoken of there is evidently a thing that we have not actually got, no doubt, coming nearer and nearer every day, but only ours in fact when the day is come. “The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.” Salvation here, therefore, is manifestly future.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1, 5, 9, 10), the same thing appears, though it be not so marked in expression. Take Hebrews again as a very plain

instance. It is said there (Heb. 7:25) that Jesus is “able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.” The passage plainly is limited to believers. It is a saving of those that are in living relationship to God. Christ is looked at as a priest, and He is a priest only for God’s people — believers. It would, therefore, be an illegitimate use of the verse to apply it to the salvation of sinners as such. Again, in chapter 9, “As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” There cannot be the shadow of a doubt that there the Spirit speaks of salvation (salvation of bodies, and not merely of souls) as a thing only effectuated when Christ in person appears to us, when He receives us to Himself in and to His own glory.

But without going through all similar statements in other epistles, let me refer to the first epistle of Peter. It appears to me that, with the exception of a single phrase in 1 Peter 1:9, salvation is always regarded as a thing not yet accomplished, and only indeed accomplished in the redemption of the body. That one phrase is: “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of [your] souls.” Now soul salvation will not be more complete for believers after Christ comes than now when they believe and are being carried through the wilderness; it is an already enjoyed blessing as regards the resting place of faith. But, with that exception, salvation in Peter applies to the deliverance that crowns the close of all the difficulties we may encounter in the passage through the desert-world, as well as to the present guardian care of our God who brings us safely

through. It is a salvation only completed at the appearing of Jesus. (See 1 Peter 1:5; 1 Peter 2:2, “grow unto salvation” in the critical text; and 1 Peter 4:18.)

This too I believe to be the meaning of “salvation” in the epistle to the Philippians; and that it is so will appear still more clearly when we come to Philippians 3, where our Lord is spoken of as a “Saviour,” even when He comes to transform the body. “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change,” etc. The real meaning is, We look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who will change our body of humiliation, that it should be conformed to His body of glory. There is the character of the salvation; it is a question not of the soul merely, but of our bodies. If we accept this thought as a true one and as the real scope of salvation throughout the context, interpreting the language here by the general object that the Holy Ghost has in view, the meaning of our verse 12 becomes plain: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” It is as if the Apostle said, I am no longer with you to warn, exhort, and stir you up when your courage is flagging — you are now thrown entirely upon God You have got the ordinary helps of bishops and deacons, but there is no present apostolic care to look to.

No doubt the Apostle’s absence was an immense loss. But God is able to turn any loss into gain, and this was the gain for them, that they were more consciously in dependence on the resources of God Himself. When the Apostle was there, they could go to him with whatever question arose; they might seek counsel direct from him. Now his departure leads them to wait upon God Himself for guidance. The effect on the spiritual would be to

make them feel the need of being more prayerful and more circumspect than ever. “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. I am not there to watch over you and to give you my counsel and help in difficulties, and emergencies, and dangers. You have to do with a mighty, subtle, active foe. Hence you have not to look to the hills, but to God, and to work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

If the Apostle was not there, but in prison far away, God, he says, is there. It is God who worketh in you. That would give solemnity of feeling, but it would also infuse confidence. There would be fear and trembling in their hearts, feeling that it is a bitter, painful thing to compromise God in any way by want of jealous self-judgment in their walk — fear and trembling because of the seriousness of the conflict. They had to do with Satan in his efforts against them. But on the other hand, God was with them, working in them. It was not the idea of anxiety and dread lest they should break down and be lost, but because of the struggle in which they were engaged with the enemy, without the presence of an apostle to render them his invaluable succour.

But now he turns to those things in which they might be to blame and certainly about which they had to be on their guard. “Do all things without murmurings and disputings [or reasonings]: that ye may be blameless and harmless [simple, or sincere], irreproachable children of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.” He calls them to that which would be manifestly a blameless

walk and spirit in the eyes of the crooked and perverse round about them. But beside this, he looks for that which would direct in them, and show men clearly the way to be delivered from their wretchedness and sin; lights in the world, “holding forth the word of life”; and this with the motive to their affections, “that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, nor laboured in vain.”

But now he puts another consideration before them. What if he, Paul, should be called to die in the career of the gospel? Up to this point he had been communicating his mind and feelings to them with the thought that he was going to live; he had stated his own conviction that God meant him to continue a little longer here below for the good of the Church. But he suggests the supposition of his death. Granting that he might suffer unto death, what then? “But if also I be poured out upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.” To him it was the very reverse of a pain or trouble, the thought of being thus a libation upon what he sweetly calls the sacrifice and service of their faith. Nay, more, he calls on them to share his feelings. “For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.” Thus the Apostle triumphs, turning not only his imprisonment into a question of joy, but also the anticipation, were it God’s will, of his laying down his life in the work. He is even congratulating them upon the joyful news. How mighty and unselfish is the power of faith! He calls upon them that there should be this perfect reciprocity of joy through faith, that they might take it as a personal honour, and feel a common interest in his joy, as much as if it were for themselves. This is just what love does produce. As the Apostle identified himself with them, so

they, in their measure, would identify themselves with him. May the Lord grant us to know it better through His grace.

“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.” What a beautiful sample of the same self-denying love which the Apostle had pointed out in Christ and was seeking to form in the hearts of the Philippians! We know what Timothy was to the Apostle, but though to lose him, especially then, might be the greatest privation to himself, still he says, “I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you.”

Divine love thinks of the good of others, and grace had wrought this in the Apostle. It was to furnish nothing of its own. He desired to know their state that his own heart might be comforted. Is not this the mind which was also in Christ Jesus? The imprisoned Apostle sent Timotheus from himself to them in the hope of getting good tidings of these saints that were so dear to his heart. “For I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state” — no one with such genuine affection and care, not merely for me, but for you. “For all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.” There was at once what was the common bond. The love of Christ filled both and made them both serve. They were doing the same thing. There was mutual confidence for the same reason; for Christ and stumbling-blocks are incompatible. “Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.”

What then does he add? He could not come as yet himself; he was delaying Timothy till the result of his trial should be known, that the Philippians might have the latest intelligence about that which he was sure would be near to their hearts. But would he leave them without a word meanwhile? Far from it. He says, “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour.” We see how love delights to share all things with others. He chooses terms which would link Epaphroditus with himself — “my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier.” There was everything that could clothe him with honour and endear him to the saints, “but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants.” He had all these insignia of honour in the cause of Christ. Nothing can be sweeter than this unfolding of affection; but it could only be, because the state of the Philippians had been thoroughly sound with God. We see nothing of this when he writes to the Galatians or Corinthians. So far from being sound in state, they were not even sound in the faith. The Galatians, we know, were letting slip justification; the consequence is, there is not an epistle so reserved and distant, as we may see in the marked absence of personal salutation. He wrote to them as a duty, as an urgent service springing from his love that desired their deliverance; but he had no kind of liberty in letting out his affections in the way we find here. God Himself led him to act thus differently.

“For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick, nigh unto death; but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” I cannot conceive a

more admirable picture of divine affections flowing out without hindrance to these saints. He descants upon what Timothy was to him, whom he hoped to send to them, and now upon Epaphroditus who had come from them as their messenger. His heart glows, and he opened out all his feelings about this link between himself and them. “He longed after you all and was full of heaviness,” not because he was sick himself or was nigh unto death, but “because that ye had heard that he had been sick.”

Such was the heart of Epaphroditus; such was Paul’s to see and record it. Both were desirous that they should be relieved, by knowing how the Lord had shown Himself on their behalf. “But God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. See how the Apostle loves to trace the goodness of God, not merely toward the person who was the immediate object of God’s dealings, but toward himself also. Scripture nowhere intimates such a thing in the mind of God as looking coldly upon the sickness or death of His children. Too often this is the case with us, as if it did not much matter, or it were a point of spirituality to be like a stone.

There is such a thing as the Spirit of God identifying Himself with human affections, as well as with divine ones. We find divine affections in Philippians 1, and human affections here in Philippians 2. The Holy Spirit has been pleased not only to bring down divine affections, so to speak, and put them into us, but also to animate the human affections of the saints. Christ Himself had them in His heart, for He was truly man. And now the Spirit of God gives another and higher value to these affections in the saints of God. This is as

plain as it is important. The Holy Ghost mingles Himself, so to speak, with all. “I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.” The Apostle does not say, And that I may rejoice too. There is no unreality, nothing but transparent truthfulness here, as well as the most blessed love. It is “that ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.” He did feel the pang of parting with Epaphroditus, but he could rejoice that such a help went to them, because they would rejoice; and he himself would be the less sorrowful. It was his loss, but assuredly it would be their gain.

“Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation.” Remark how careful he is to commend his fellow labourer to the esteem of the saints. Epaphroditus does not seem to have been a man of much outward mark. But men highly gifted ought to be tenacious on behalf of those of lesser gift. Certainly in the case of the Apostle, instead of being jealous as to others, there is the greatest desire to keep up their value in the eyes of the saints. “Hold such in reputation.” Others might have feared for Epaphroditus or others like him, lest they might be puffed up. “Receive him,” he says, “with all gladness, and hold such in reputation; because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.” We do not find any great account of what he had done in preaching or teaching; but there was the earnest, unselfish service of love in this blessed man of God, and that was enough for the Apostle Paul and ought to be also for God’s children.

The Lord grant that we may be thus quick to discern and thus hearty in our appreciation of what is of Christ in

others, whoever they may be, cultivating not so much keenness of eye for that which is painful and inconsistent in the saints, as steady desire for whatever brings Christ before the soul, whatever gives the ring of true metal, whatever bears the stamp of the Spirit of God.

Philippians 3

The Apostle had touched on various sources of joy to himself and the saints he was addressing. It was with joy he made supplication for them all (Phil. 1:4). It was with joy, and ever new joy, that he beheld his very bonds giving a fresh impulse to the preaching of Christ (Phil. 1:18). So too he is assured of his continuance with them all for their progress and joy of faith, that their boasting might abound in Christ through him (Phil. 1:25). Next, he called on them to fulfil his joy (Phil. 2:2), not merely by the proof of their love to him, but by cultivating unity of mind and mutual love according to Christ, who, though the highest, made Himself the lowest in grace, and is now exalted to the pinnacle of glory. “Yea, and if I be offered (or, poured forth) on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me.” Phil. 2:17, 18. So, again, the Apostle sends away his companion and solace, Epaphroditus, when recovered, to the Philippians, who were uneasy at the tidings of his dangerous sickness, “that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be less sorrowful.” Phil. 2:28.

But there is a joy independent of all passing circumstances, and deeper than all others, because it is nearer to, yea, it is the one spring of all joy, it is to this

the Apostle now calls them. “Finally [or, for the rest], my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” It is of the deepest moment that we, that all saints, should heed the call. It is due to Him, in whom we are exhorted to rejoice, that we should bear a true testimony in this respect. I say not a testimony worthy of Him, for none is, save that which God the Father has borne and bears, and that which the Holy Ghost renders in word and deed. Still, great as our shortcoming is, the Holy Ghost is in us to give a divine appreciation of the Lord. May we not then dishonour Him by gloomy thoughts, by unbelieving feelings, by ways that betoken fear, doubt, dissatisfaction, yearning after creature pleasure in one form or another; but may we be enabled by faith, heartily, simply, alone or with others, in public and in private, to “rejoice in the Lord.”

It was thus with Paul and Silas when the foundation of the assembly at Philippi was laid at midnight in the prison, and the jailer and his house were gathered among the first fruits (Acts 16:25-34). Long labours had intervened, many years of reproach and suffering. The heart of the Apostle fresh as ever, though a prisoner at Rome, calls on the saints to “rejoice in the Lord.” So he had taught when with them; so he had already urged in this letter, though now he presses it with greater distinctness as to its ground and spring. “To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.” It was no trouble to him, for he loved them too well to mind it. It was safe for them, for Satan threatened otherwise. Joy in the Lord is the truest safeguard against the religious snares of the enemy. Where the truth is known, the grand thing is to have the affections kept on the right object, and withal in happy liberty. This is secured by rejoicing in the Lord, which

supposes the heart at rest in His grace, and Himself known and beloved, the most attractive and precious object before us. Put Him at a distance, wrap Him in clouds and darkness, think of Him mainly as the inflexible Judge about to be revealed in flaming fire taking vengeance, mix all this up with your own associations and relationships to Him, and with your experience; and is it any wonder that, under such conditions, peace is unknown, and eternal life a question unsolved and insoluble till the day of death or judgment? In such a state "rejoice in the Lord" has no tangible place, no practical application, not even a distinct meaning; and the soul is exposed, but for divine mercy which by other means may hinder all, to sink lower and lower into the dregs and deceits of Judaizers.

Hence, says the Apostle, "beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." v. 2. There is not only a warning to take heed, but accumulated and bitter scorn of these high-minded men. For, rejecting grace and not submitting to the righteousness of God, they were restlessly prowling about, themselves unclean, whatever their pretensions; their work mischievous, their boasted privileges not only null but despicable in the extreme. There were "the dogs" now, not Gentiles even, still less Christians, as such, but the Judaizers. Evil workmen were they, and not the circumcision, which they affected literally or in principle — they were but "the concision." "For we," the Apostle says with emphasis, "are the circumcision (whatever we might have been in the flesh, Jews or Gentiles — it mattered not), who worship God in the Spirit, [or, according to the best MSS, 'who worship by God's Spirit'], and boast in Christ Jesus, and trust not in flesh" v. 3.

It is a mistake to imagine that these adversaries of God's work advocated a return to mere Judaism. Such there were elsewhere, as in Hebrews, but they are treated as apostates. The class here in view consists rather of persons who professed Christianity, but sought to blend the law along with it, a system of evil which, far from being rare, is the commonest thing nowadays. Do you not hear of a fresh recourse to the cross, and fresh sprinkling of the blood to restore the soul? Are there not souls who take the place of God's children and Church, and yet confess themselves miserable sinners, crying for mercy — sheep of His pasture, yet tied and bound with the chain of their sins? Does not this return to Jewish experience, under tutors and governors, ignore Christianity and annul redemption and the Spirit of adoption? Are there not notions still of holy places and holy castes, holy feast days and fast days, and administration of sacraments among those baptized into Christ's death? The Word of God is read, Christ is more or less preached, but these unquestionable Jewish elements are mingled with what is Christian. Hence human forms of prayer, ordinances, etc., take the place of God's Spirit as the power of worship; law-fulfilling (though by Christ) is openly boasted as the door into heaven, and our only title of righteousness; and thus to be risen with Christ, to be not in flesh but in Spirit, is supposed to be a fanatical dream, instead of the only condition which the Holy Ghost now recognizes as properly Christian.

Next, in verses 4-6, the Apostle briefly exposes the entire baselessness of their claims in comparison of his own, if flesh availed in divine things. "Though I [again speaking emphatically] have trust in flesh also; if

another think to trust in flesh, I more: in circumcision of eight days, of the race of Israel, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee, as to zeal, persecuting the Church; as to righteousness that is in the law, blameless." Thus, on grounds of the best earthly stock, due honour to ancient and divine ordinances, a high rank acquired in the school of tradition, an utter repudiation and hatred of new light in religion, and a life blameless according to the law, who could stand as firmly as Paul? "But," adds he, "what things were gain to me, these I counted loss on account of Christ. But so then I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, on account of whom I suffered the loss of all, and count them to be dung [refuse], that I may win Christ and be found in him, not having my righteousness, which [is] of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God on my faith; to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if by any means I may arrive at the resurrection which is from out of the dead." vv. 7-11.

What was it, then, which had wrought so deep, so permanent, and, as we know from Acts 9, so sudden a change? What poured contempt on every natural, on every religious advantage from his birth up to the day when, with credentials from the high priest, he neared Damascus? It was the heavenly vision which arrested him on the way; it was Christ seen in glory, yet one with those whom his infatuated zeal was persecuting to prison and death. "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest." Sure that He whose light shone on him brighter than the noonday sun was no other than the Lord God of Israel,

the astonished Saul of Tarsus learns from His own mouth that He was the Crucified, whose disciples he would have up to this conscientiously exterminated. No wonder, then, that the converted, delivered Israelite, obedient to the heavenly vision, judges all things by this new and divine light. A new creature in Christ, for him old things had passed away, all things were become new; all things were of that God who reconciled to Himself by Jesus Christ. Hence the things that were to him gains, he counted loss on account of Christ; yea, all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge, as he says with such affection, “of Christ Jesus my Lord,” on whose account he not only suffered the loss of all at first, but now to the last continued to count them refuse that he might gain Christ (or, have Him for gain). What was his boasted righteousness now? His one thought was to be found in Christ, not having any such righteousness of his own, which must be legal, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God grounded on faith; to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (not even Christ on this side the grave), and the fellowship of His sufferings. His eye was on Christ above, and if he added aught of Christ here, it was not in His deeds of power, nor His recognition of the ancient sheepfold, but in the moral glory of His sufferings. It was in that which proved the total alienation of man from God in his good things, not in his bad alone; in his religion, and not merely in his lusts and passions. His own experience was the witness of it His confidence in the tradition of the elders, in Israel, in the law even, was ruin and rebellion to God as He now reveals Himself in Him who died and rose and ascended. Nothing, consequently, has the trust of his soul or value in his eyes, but Christ; and even if he could

have anything else that looked good, he would know none but Christ, and have nothing but Christ the sufferer, risen and in heaven, as his portion. Hence conformity to His death was now a jewel to be won, rather than an evil to be shunned. Let the path be ever so dangerous, come what might, all would be welcome, “if by any means I may arrive at the resurrection from out of the dead.” v. 11. This last is not an expression of fear or failure, but of a heart which so prized the blessing of being thus with Christ as to mind no suffering that might intervene.

Whatever the pathway might be, the Apostle intimated, as we have seen, that he must be there. Such was the value of the resurrection of the just in his eyes. Like the Israelite in Psalm 84 on his way to Jerusalem, the ways were in his heart. He loved the way of Jesus, of His sufferings, of the cross, and not merely the glory at the end. “Not as though I had already attained [literally, received, i.e., the prize], or am already perfected.” It was not a question merely of the soul’s happiness. “I would to God,” he had said to king Agrippa, “that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” Who of all men was so happy as the Apostle Paul? Yet he warns us against supposing that he had yet obtained what he desired. There is no such thing as getting the prize till we are in the resurrection from among the dead. But he adds, “I follow after [or pursue], if also I may lay hold, for that also I am laid hold on by Christ.” v. 12. He keeps his eye fixed upon Christ all the way through as well as at last. This was the strength of his triumphing over all the difficulties that lay between. No present experience, no actual joy detains his heart

from God's end. The Apostle wanted to gain possession of Christ by and by; but also Christ had possession of himself already.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have laid hold [whatever others might dream]; but one thing, forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue...." v. 13. The Apostle does not mean that one ought to overlook, or that he did overlook his past sins and failures. On the contrary, it is most evil to forget what Christ has suffered for our sakes, and also the manifold ways wherein we have dishonoured God. This will not at all interfere with settled peace — rather the reverse. A man can rejoice so much the more in the Lord if he fully judge his failure. It is the tendency of a conscience not thoroughly happy to desire to escape from thinking of anything in which we have consciously turned aside to the grief of the Holy Ghost. It is a right thing to search ourselves through and through; it is right to ask God to search and try us, and to lead us in the way everlasting. Confidence in grace, so far from weakening the sense of our own shortcomings or covering over our failure, is the very spring that enables us to see and deal with the reality of things in the presence of God. Thus the Apostle speaks of "forgetting the things behind," not with reference to his failure, but rather to his points of progress, the steps or stages in which he had made advance in the knowledge of Christ. Instead of dwelling upon any attainment, as if it were something to be thought of (like the Pharisee comparing himself with his neighbour), here we have this blessed man forgetting all that might have fed self-complacency or been creditable to himself. His back was on the ground traversed. "Stretching out to the things before, I

pursue toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." v. 14. This can only be in the resurrection state. Till then he was content to run. This was his one business. It was to live Christ, because Christ was his object.

But now follows another thing which we need to bear in mind. We find different conditions and not at all the same degree of progress made by the children of God. What then is the grand principle to guide us? Let us suppose a company of believers gathered together, all of the same mind, every one of them brought up to think exactly alike, from baptism with water to the coming and kingdom of Christ, their minds made up and consenting even about points of detail. Would this satisfy the heart? Would it give a just witness to the ways of God toward His children? I dare not think so. It is sweet where God brings souls by exercise of spiritual judgment under the guidance of the Holy Ghost to feel alike. But where sameness is the result of dinning one doctrine into people's heads, and by rules and regulations which squeeze minds into monotony, can anything be more miserable? The Apostle lays down the only divine rule for dealing with these cases. We have to do with a state of things where there exist all varieties of attainments. In heaven we shall know as we are known; but the question is how to bear ourselves about these things here. It is a natural desire that all should grow and rise to a certain height of the stature of Christ. But are we not apt to confound the point desired with our own idea of it? to desire that people should have our mind. This we have to guard against, and the true corrective is given here.

“As many, therefore, as be perfect, let us be thus minded.” v. 15. He speaks of himself and others also, as being “perfect”; but there is no contradiction of what went before. When he had, in verse 12, disclaimed as yet the reception of the prize and being perfected, he meant that he was not yet out of the conflict in a resurrection condition. But when he here exhorts “as many as be perfect,” he means those who are of full age in the faith, thoroughly grounded in the Christian position, entering into it by faith and spiritual intelligence. It means a Christian who is not a babe, but full grown; not, of course, a Christian who has thoroughly finished his course, for this is in resurrection, but one who has become a man in Christ. He shall not have grown up into the full likeness of Christ till He comes and transforms us like to His glory. But there is such a thing even here as growing into the full knowledge of the mind of God, and it is through having got Christ in glory before us now the personal object of our souls. But suppose there are others among the children of God still in difficulty and doubt, what then? Are we to make them adopt our feelings and judgment about things? Certainly not. It would be a positive loss, unless it were by the power of the Holy Ghost leading the saints into a fuller apprehension of Christ.

The reference here is not to such matters of faith or practice as preclude difference. We ought not to have a hesitation where the glory of the Lord is concerned. There can be no question about sin. It is taken for granted in the Bible that no difference of mind could be tolerated where Christ is at stake. All saints instinctively see the enormity of bringing in moral evil to the table of the Lord. The Holy Ghost counts upon our resenting

affronts to God. Allegiance to Him commands the conscience and rouses the heart of every saint of God if properly stated. These things God reckons upon. Nor is it only the wise and intelligent who are able to judge things of the sort, but the babes also. The only cases that ought to be brought before the Church as such are those which every believer is able to judge. It is quite a mistake to drag habitually everything before the assembly; but where things come out of an evidently immoral or of a heretical character, there any saint rejects the poison, one as much as another. It is not the babes who have difficulties or who give trouble, as a general rule. How often clever, intelligent people do the mischief, while the simple-minded would feel the evil of such things at once! Here, on the contrary, the matters spoken of are such as some saints might feel, and not others. There might be practical or doctrinal questions, as the particular manner in which children ought to be brought up, or the style of living, furniture or house. There one must be content to point out the holy principles of God, not to assume hastily that our own measure is such that we ought to attempt to make every other adjust his children or house by it. God is jealous that He should have the forming of His saints. A good example is precious, and we cannot be too careful as to the ways we allow. But having said this, it is for the children of God to examine themselves conscientiously by His Word. In such things we must be patient and look for the action of God by His own truth on the souls of His saints.

We may suggest what we can of the truth of God to influence the heart; but there is no absolute rule to be laid down by any on points like these. One has often

known persons who began strongly with a certain idea which governed them, and with which they zealously sought to govern others. How long does it stand? In the very thing on which they have prided themselves, they are apt to break down. It is Christ whom God makes the standard of everything. All else fails. Why push so strongly and in haste? “If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.” There is no need then to be anxious. “Nevertheless whereto we have attained, walk by the same.” v. 16. So far as we are occupied with Christ together and see His mind or will, it is of great importance that we should walk together.

But the Apostle goes farther; he refers to his own example and points out as a beacon the walk of some, once owned as brethren. Need I say that it was no fleshly thing in the Apostle thus to speak of himself? As a mere man, a person would be ashamed to talk about himself; it would be but a piece of vanity. The Apostle was so completely raised above the thoughts of men, he so thoroughly realized the power of God in Christ, that it just illustrated the energy of the Spirit in him. He was led of the Holy Ghost to speak thus. He calls upon them therefore to be imitators together of him, and to mark those that walk so as ye have us for an example (v. 17). “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 glory in their shame, who mind earthly things.” v. 18, 19. We are not even told whether these men had been put away from the Church of God. They are characterized as enemies of the cross of Christ, and yet they may not have been formally without. If so, what a deplorable state of things before the eyes of the

Apostle! persons probably not guilty of such flagrant wickedness as to require excision, and yet the source of the deepest sorrow to the Apostle. They were going on carelessly, indifferently. How awful to view some within perhaps with less hope than others put away for flagrant sin! We all know how truly this is verified in the present state of Christendom. How many bear the name of Christ who by their ways show there is not the slightest breath of divine life in them! Professing to know God, in works they deny Him.

This drew out the tears of the Apostle even in the midst of his joy; but he turns it to a practical profit, calling on the saints to take heed. Let us watch against the beginnings of self-indulgence or allowing earthliness. "For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven"; our real association is with Him who is there. Whatever we might have been as citizens of the earth, it is at an end now and forever. We belong to Christ on high. It is not merely that we are going there, but we belong to heaven now. Our commonwealth, our citizenship, is there; and therefore from thence also "we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour." He has decided to have us in entire fellowship with the home to which we pertain, because it is His. He is coming from heaven; and, when He does, "he will change our body of humiliation so as to be conformed to the body of his glory according to the working whereby he is able also to subdue all things to himself." Then we shall be manifested what we now are in call, life, and desire. We are now heavenly, and then we shall be declared and proved to be so. We belong to heaven even while we are upon the earth; then it will be made plain that we had no real link with the earth, but with Christ above.

The Lord grant that we may seek to bring this into everything with which we have to do, into the heart, the home, and the whole life. He has made us His friends, and may we be enabled, with a purged conscience and with a heart rejoicing in Himself, to look onward to that blessed moment when we shall prove Him true to all the hopes He has given us.

Philippians 4

The main truth which was in the mind of the Apostle, and which the Lord was using him to lay upon the hearts of the Philippian saints, was now clearly expressed and enforced. The rest of the epistle, this last chapter, consists rather in the connected exhortations and practical use to which it was turned for present profit. Indeed it may have been noticed that, throughout, this epistle is eminently practical. Every whit of it has an immediate and important bearing upon the communion and walk of the saint of God. Of course in a general way there is no truth which is not meant to deal with the heart and walk in some way or another; yet I do not hesitate to say that this epistle is remarkable for nothing more than for its being the personal experience of the Apostle himself seeking to raise the experience of the saints at Philippi to the same measure, yea, according to the standard of Christ Himself. Accordingly, having shown us Christ fully, both as an example here below and as a motive in heaven (the earthly example being specially given in Phil. 2, and the heavenly motive in Phil. 3) now comes the practical object to which it is applied.

“Therefore,” says he, “my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and my crown, so stand fast in the

Lord, my dearly beloved." It is evident that the spiritual affections of the Apostle were deeply moved. Brotherly love was flowing out powerfully, and not the less because he had been occupied with Christ, with the deep feeling of what Christ had been and is, and with the joyous anticipation of that which the saints are destined to be when they see Him coming from heaven in the fullness of His grace and power, changing even their very bodies of humiliation that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. Salvation being only then and there complete, he bids them "so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved." And so much the more because it would appear that there were some among them who were at variance one with another.

Things were working there which separated in the way of affection, or at least, in the service of the Lord, those who had been engaged in it from earliest days. And this may be found where there is nothing at work of a scandalous character, because the very ardour and zeal of the servant of God may easily carry him, if there be not adequate occupation with Christ, into danger; even service ensnares and imperils where it becomes an object instead of Christ. It would appear that such was the case with some active saints at Philippi. "I beseech Euodia, and I beseech Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord; yea, I entreat thee also true yoke-fellow, help them [i.e., these women just named], seeing that they contended with me in the gospel, with Clement also and the rest of my fellow-labourers whose names are in the book of life."

Now, it is plain that there are two things which the Apostle here presses. First is the great importance of having the same mind not only in the Lord but also in

the work of the Lord. The danger is of having some aim or way of our own in that holy occupation. The Lord is assuredly jealous over those whom He employs, and He works continually to preserve each servant in the immediate sense of his own responsibility to Himself. No one need fear that this would interfere with mutual respect or hinder the outflow of divine affection linking together the various servants of God. Man would think so because he must judge from his own selfish heart. It is the flesh that seeks its own things; while the Spirit of Christ, whatever may be its holy judgment of evil, is never selfish. It is the grossest mistake to suppose that where the heart is brought to estimate all things according to God, you bring in an element of division between brethren; not this, but the indulgence of flesh opens the door to strife and schism.

Supposing a child of God who has gone astray, what is it that separates him from his brethren? Nothing but the evil that has been indulged in. The Holy Ghost acts in the man's soul; now he feels, confesses, and separates from that which is fleshly. At once the balance is restored and you are more united in love with that erring soul than, perhaps, you ever were before. Up to that time there may have been much which hindered fellowship. The irritability of spirit, the censoriousness, the vanity, the self-confidence broke out too often in the very service and worship of God — all this had previously produced many an anxious feeling for spiritual minds, and this just because there was real love to his soul. The consequence was so far that which separated, not in outward walk, but in fellowship of heart; whereas the moment there was the genuine action of the Holy Spirit of God — sin having actually,

perhaps, broken out because of nature not being judged and the separation having become complete — the moment the evil is dealt with even in the man's spirit, and he owns frankly that he has sinned against the Lord, your heart is knit to him and you have a confidence in him which may never have existed before.

The notion is false, therefore, that serious judgment of evil is what divides between brethren. On the contrary, it is evil (not separation from it) which sows discord or makes separation necessary among brethren. Gracious separation from evil knits the hearts of those who are true with the Lord. It is holiness in fact. Apart from sin there is the enjoyment of God Himself and of His good and acceptable will. In this world holiness implies the judgment of evil and separation from it in heart and practice, as far as we are concerned. The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is that which gathers the children of God on the ground that all their evil has been judged there and separated from them forever by His death.

No matter how you look at it, in every case it is evil that divides, and it is the judgment of evil that unites hearts, in an evil world according to God. Any unity of the children of God would be a positive sin against Him if it were not founded upon separation from evil. Having referred to the broad and fundamental principle of separation from evil, which will be found to be eminently practical, we may turn now to see its application to the matter before us.

At Philippi there rose before the Apostle's heart godly persons there at work; but work is not always Christ and may be division. The tendency is not uncommon to disparage what another is found doing, and to exalt

ourselves in what we know to be our own line of things. This tends to break up happy fellowship of heart; and, where there is anything of a spiritual atmosphere, these things are deeply felt. Among the Corinthians this was but a small thing compared with the grosser evils that were active in their midst; but at Philippi where the state was comparatively healthy and blessed, where also the spirit of obedience reigned as we know, the lack of harmony from whatever cause it may have sprung becomes of importance; and the variance therefore of these two sisters is pressed home by the Spirit of God, but not before ample comfort had been ministered, which would encourage their hearts to look to Christ.

How tender, and withal how personal, is the appeal to each of these Christian women! “I exhort Euodia and I exhort Syntyche that they be of the same mind in the Lord.” He begins with the Lord, not with the service, though the variance may have grown up in its course. He calls on them one by one (for one might hear if not the other) to be of the same mind in the Lord. Depend upon it that, where the Lord occupies us, differences soon dwindle. Having each the eye fixed upon the Lord, there is found a common object of attraction, and thus the enemy’s hope of producing alienation is defeated at once.

He adds a request also to his true yokefellow. I suppose the reference is to Epaphroditus, of whom he had spoken with ardent affection in Philippians 2. “Yoke” in Scripture is a badge of union or of subjection, as the case may be, in service. Thus, in 2 Corinthians 6, the believer is told not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Many narrow that scripture to the natural relationship of marriage. But though the marriage tie

between believers and unbelievers is evidently not according to God, yet I doubt that there is any particular allusion to it in that scripture. The object there of the Spirit of God is to take up the commixture of the believer with the unbeliever in the service and worship of God. The Apostle brings forward the temple of God as well as individual matters, and shows that we are not to have fellowship corporately any more than individually with unbelievers. I only refer to it now because it is often put aside from the consciences of the children of God through the mistaken habit of referring it to marriage; whereas, it is plain on the face of it that the direction the Holy Ghost gives would not strictly apply to marriage.

Bad as it is for a believer to marry an unbeliever, God does not even then say, Come out from the relationship; leave your wife; part from your husband. Apply it to its legitimate object (that is, fellowship with unbelievers in the things of God), and then you have a maxim of deep and urgent importance. I am not to unite with the world in any one thing that concerns the service and worship of God. This is the true meaning of being unequally yoked. “Come out and be separate” is then the special word that applies to any such unholy alliance.

This makes all plain, when men ask if we are not to do anything for the world. If there is sorrow and want, am I not to help sufferers? Surely if there be a peculiar duty to the household of faith, I am also bound to do good unto all men; but there is no yoking together with others outside Christ in this, and no communion. The worldly man gives because he is generous, or feels for the need of the person, or is expected to give. The child of God does it because it is the will of God. The one acts on the

ground of nature, the other in faith. Even in the most ordinary necessary acts, as eating and drinking, I may and ought to do it all to God's glory.

Suppose a man drowning, or a house on fire, there is a claim of course on any man; but to use the help that a servant of God might render on such occasions, as a reason for joining the world with the saint in the service of God, is to deceive or be deceived — it may be, willingly. I have no hesitation in saying that to put an unbeliever on the ground of joining in prayers and hymns and taking the Lord's supper, to sanction his joining with you in such services, is as far as you can to damage if not destroy his soul. No believer would act thus without an object other than Christ. What the Holy Ghost seeks for the unregenerate soul is to convince him of his ruin; but, if yoked with you in God's work or temple, you are cheating him (or he you) into a false ground. You thus far treat him as an acceptable worshipper and make him think that he is doing God's service as truly, though perhaps not so well, as yourself. This is as contrary to holiness as to love, equally opposed to God's glory and man's good.

Were these godly, energetic women now apart in spirit? He not only exhorts each separately, but asks Epaphroditus as I suppose, the true yokefellow of the Apostle, to help them. For these women had shared the Apostle's sufferings in the gospel when it entered Philippi. It is not, "And entreat thee," as in the English version or the commonly received text; nor is it, "Yea and," etc. The best authorities omit "and" altogether, which was a corruption of "yea." For the Apostle is continuing in verse 3 the same thought as in verse 2, and is urging his dear and true yokefellow at Philippi to

succour those previously named women (not others, as the ordinary rendering might convey), “the which” (haitines) or “since they” contended with him in the gospel. It is not said that they preached; there is no reference to public service here.

There is a great difference between preaching the gospel and sharing the contentions of the gospel. Even a man might have laboured diligently and never have preached in his life; and there might be some striving every day in the gospel as diligently, or more so even, than those who preached it every day. There is beautiful choice in the language of the Holy Ghost. We all ought to know that the New Testament puts the Christian woman in the place of exceeding blessedness, removing every thought that would give her an inferior place in Christ; but it puts her also at the same time in the background, wherever it is a case of public action. Here officially, so to speak, the man is called to be uncovered, the woman to be veiled. She is thus, as it were, put behind the man; whereas, when you speak of our privileges in Christ, there is neither male nor female. It is of importance to see where there is no difference and where there is.

The first epistle to the Corinthians is most plain that the head of the woman is the man; and as Christ is the glory of the man, so the man is the glory of the woman. We find there the administrative difference between the man and the woman. When you come to the heavenly privileges we have in Christ, all these distinctions disappear. There is no public action that I know in the world or in the Church allotted to the Christian woman. As to private dealing with souls, the case is different. In their father’s house, the four daughters of Philip may have prophesied. They were evidently highly gifted

women; for it is not said of them that they laboured in the gospel, but that they prophesied — one of the highest forms of gift from Christ. At the same time the Holy Spirit, who tells us that a woman might and did prophesy as a fact, instructs us that it is forbidden to a woman to speak in the Church where prophesying properly had its course. But there a woman was forbidden to speak, not even allowed to ask a question, much less to give an answer. Yet as to the private scene, at home, even with an Apollos, a woman might fitly act; that is, if she acted under and with her husband. Priscilla might be of more spiritual weight than Aquilla; but this very thing would lead her to be the more careful to take an unobtrusive lowly place. The yokefellow of the Apostle seems to have been somewhat timid of helping these women. The Apostle, accordingly, entreats him also as he had exhorted him. “Help those women in that they contended with me in the gospel.” They were not putting themselves forward in an unseemly public sort, but they had shared the early trials of the gospel with the Apostle Paul.

At Corinth the women assumed much, and the Apostle manifests his sense of it by the reproachful demand, if the Word of God came out from them, or if it came to them only (1 Cor. 14:36). Thus, and not only thus, had they quite slipped aside from that which prevailed in the churches of the saints. No doubt they reasoned that, if women had gifts, why should they not exercise them in all places? But He who gives the gift is alone entitled to say when, how, and by whom it is to be exercised. At Philippi where there was an obedient spirit, there might have been too great reluctance to meddle with these otherwise estimable women who were estranged from

each other. The Apostle bids Epaphroditus to render his help. “Help them who are such as contended with me in the gospel.” He gives them special praise. They strove for and with him in the work. He joins himself with those persons whom his yokefellow may have been rather afraid of. He joins them also with Clement and other fellow labourers. What tenderness in touching the case! He encourages the fellowship in the service of the gospel not only with faithful men, but with women whose faithfulness was not forgotten because there were painful hindrances just now.

But now, leaving the question of variance among them, he returns to his topic of exceeding joy. He had been encouraging one who had his sympathy and confidence to help these women. He now calls on all to rejoice in the Lord alway. If he touched on these sorrows, let them not suppose that he wanted to dampen their joy; on the contrary, “Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice.” This, let me repeat, is an important thing practically. It is a total mistake when we allow difficulties or differences among the saints of God to hinder our perfect delight in the Lord. Do we desire the glory of Christ among those who are His? I must always maintain that glory in my own soul if I am to be a witness to Christ among others. Is the Lord’s love affected or at least enfeebled by these passing circumstances? Is His glory less bright because some shades of self have betrayed themselves over the brow of His saints? Surely not. Thus he turns to the keynote of the epistle, that joy in the Lord of which he had been speaking as his own portion now, and by-and-by in chapters 1 and 2, and that to which they were called in chapter 3 and again in chapter 4.

Is it not a sorrow to think where Christians have got to in this respect — how this answer of heart to Christ has faded away from the hearts of so many; how even the assembling together to remember Christ in His supper does not always awaken fullness of joy, but often an uneasy feeling and most painful shrinking back from His table as if it concealed some hidden danger, some lion in the way, instead of Jesus my Saviour and Lord, who loved me and gave Himself for me? What humiliation of spirit ought to be ours as we think of all that thus dishonours the name of Christ. But does God intend that even this should hinder our joy? In no wise. Let the ruined state of God's people be in Israel or in the Church, those who felt it most invariably enjoyed the greatest nearness to Himself and most of all entered into His own joy, while at the same time they mourned the more over the shortcomings of those bearing His name. The two things go together. Show me hearts which, though godly, are not happy; hearts over-occupied with the circumstances of the Church, constantly talking about the evil and low condition here and there; and you will never show me souls that deeply enjoy the Lord and His grace; whereas in the person who really enjoys the Lord and has the consciousness of what Christ and the Church of God are in Christ and should be in the power of the Spirit now, who therefore best estimates what Christendom has become, there will be the two things harmonized — the heart resting upon Christ, dwelling in His love; while, at the same time, man's weakness and Satan's malice in ruining all can be rightly judged. These two things we have to cultivate.

"Let your moderation [mildness] be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful [anxious] about nothing;

but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." vv. 5, 6. To prayer is added thanksgiving, because the Lord is entitled to it. The heart should not forget what a God we are making our requests to. In the confidence of this let us thank Him, even when we are spreading our wants before Him. But he had said before this, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." Supposing there is someone who has seen us a little off our balance in standing upon our rights, real or imaginary, something which contradicted the gentleness of Christ, ought we not to feel humbled, and take an early opportunity to wipe off what may have given a false impression to that man's soul? God would have our readiness to yield, not resist, known, and this not sometimes or to some persons, but to all men. By moderation the Apostle means that spirit of meekness which can only be where the will is not allowed to work actively for that which we may desire. And what a reason why we need not be anxious to assert a claim, even when we are right! "The Lord is at hand." Where there is the happy feeling in the soul that one is doing that which pleases God, there is generally the readiness of trust in the Lord that puts aside anxiety and leaves all in His hands. Besides, He is coming soon.

He will bring out everything that is according to Himself. He will bless every desire wherever there may have been a true testimony for Himself. He will give effect to it in that day. "The Lord is at hand." He is not come yet, but you can go to Him now and lay all your requests before Him, assured that He is near, that He is coming. And what is the result? "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts

and minds through Christ Jesus." v. 7. When the heart commits to God all that would be a burden to it, the consequence is that His peace, the peace in which He moves and lives, guards us from the entrance of all that would harass. The sources of care are cast into the Lord's lap, and the peace of God Himself, which surpasses every understanding, becomes our protection.

Wherever we have grace to spread before God what would have tried us (had we thought of it and kept it before our spirits), there is infallibly His own peace as the answer of God to it. The affections are at rest, and the working of the mind that would otherwise forecast evil. Hence all is calmed down by the peace of God Himself.

Peace is viewed in more ways than one in Scripture. The peace of God here has nothing to do with the purging of conscience. It is a question of keeping heart and mind. Where conscience is yet burdened, there is but one way of finding peace. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Sins were there, and how was the moral nature and majesty of God to be vindicated about sin? Far from God, in all our ways at war with God, how could we have peace with Him? The only door, through which we, poor enemies, pass out of such a condition into peace with God, is by believing the testimony He has given of His Son. But this is "peace with God," not "the peace of God." If I endeavour to get comfort for my conscience by spreading out my need before God, there is never full rest of conscience. The only means entitled to give rest to the sin-stricken is faith in God's assurance that sins are blotted out by the blood, and sin has been perfectly judged in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. "By him all that believe are

justified." If one's own state mingles for a single moment with this, it is a delusion on such a ground to reckon upon peace with God. But if I believe on Christ and what He has done, I can boldly say that Christ deserved that even my sins should be forgiven. Therefore I can add, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." The value is not in the faith, but in our Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot get the blessing without believing, but it is an answer to the worth of Christ in God's sight.

But, besides this settled peace which we have through the work of Christ, there is the practical peace of God, which has nothing to do with the remission of sins (though assuming it as a settled thing for a foundation), but of the circumstances through which the believer passes day by day. Paul was in prison, when he wrote to the Philippians, unable to build up the churches or to labour in the gospel. He might have been cast down in spirit, but he never was more happy in his life. How is this? Because, instead of being anxious and troubled about the danger of the Church and the afflictions of individuals, about souls that were perishing, he looked at them in connection with God, instead of looking at them as connected with himself. If God was in peace about these things, why should not he too be? Thus the simple resource of spreading out all before God and casting it off himself into the bosom of his Father had for its effect that God's peace kept his heart and mind. Nor was it special to the Apostle. He puts it before the saints as that which ought to be equally their portion. It is evident there is no room left for anxiety. God would not have His children burdened or troubled about circumstances. Till the Lord come, this is the blessed source of relief. God is here working, and His peace

keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, where we give Him His honour and our trust.

But even this is not all, for there are other things which claim or test us besides anxieties and cares. There is our ordinary Christian life; what can strengthen us in it? Here is the word, the apostolic counsel (v. 8), “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true.” There may not be many bright spots, but there are some; am I not to think of them? This is what I am called upon to do — to be quick of discernment, seeing not what is bad but what is good. I may have to judge what is evil, but what God looks for is that the spirit should be occupied with the good. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest [rather, venerable, or noble], whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report: if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Our consciences can answer whether these are the things we are most apt to think about. If we are swift to hear not of these things but all that is painful, while slow to hear whatever is of God, the consequence is, instead of having the God of peace as our companion, we have ourselves and others hindered by evil thoughts and communications. For that which the soul wants is only what is good. We are not exhorted to be learned in the iniquity of world or church, but “wise unto that which is good and simple concerning evil.” God has given those whom He qualifies to judge evil — spiritual men who can take it up as a duty to Him, and with sorrow and love toward those concerned — but these God employs, among other purposes, for the sake of keeping His saints in general out of the need of such tasks. It is happy that we are not all called upon to

search and pry into evil, seeing and hearing its details; but that, while the Lord may graciously interfere to guard us from being mistaken, our proper wisdom is growing in what is according to God.

Why, ordinarily, should a simple child of God occupy himself, for instance, with a bad book or a false teacher? It is enough for us if we have good ground to know that a thing is mischievous, and all we have then to do is to avoid it. If, on the contrary, I know of something good, it has a claim on love and respect; it is not only for myself but for others. We are never right if we shut up our hearts from the sympathy of Christ with the members of His body or the workings of His Spirit here below. If there were even a poor Roman Catholic priest, who knew and brought out the truth of God more plainly than others, let us not say, “can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” but, come and see if any thing come with adequate evidence of having God’s stamp upon it. Let us not limit Him who is above all circumstances; even if there be that which is most distressing, let us thank God that His gracious power refuses to be bound by any limits of man. It is of great importance that we should have largeness of heart to think of all that is good, wherever it may be.

“Those things which ye both learned, and received, and heard, and saw in me, do.” v. 9. If ever there was a man with a large heart, it was the Apostle Paul. And yet no servant of God had a deeper view of evil, and a more intense abhorrence of it. Here the Spirit directs them by what they had seen in his own spirit and ways. It is not matter of doctrine but his practical life. This goes farther than supplanting anxiety by the safeguard of God’s own peace; it is the practical power of positive

good. What is the effect upon the heart? “The God of peace shall be with you.” “The God of peace” is far more than even “the peace of God.” It is Himself the source; it is the enjoyment of His own blessed presence in this way. There is relief in having the “peace of God” as the guard of our hearts and minds; there is power in having “the God of peace” with us. Want we anything? Impossible. “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.” They had shown love to the Apostle Paul at a previous time, as we find afterward (v. 16) where he contrasts “the beginning of the gospel” with “at the last.”

The Philippians had been favoured of God and had shown their love to the Apostle in their early days. He had not forgotten it. It would appear that he rarely received from the saints of God, perhaps because he met with but few even among them that could have been trusted. It would have wrought evil by reason of their want of spiritual feeling. They might have thought something of it, or the gospel might have suffered in their minds or with others through it. But the Philippians were sufficiently simple and spiritual, and we know what delicate feelings the power of the Spirit can produce. They, accordingly, had the privilege of ministering to his wants. This the Apostle alludes to, and with exceeding sweetness of feeling on his part. He felt that the word, “at the last,” might be construed into a kind of reproach, as if they had forgotten him for a long time. He hastens to add therefore, “wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity” (v. 10). On the other hand, he guards them against supposing he

wanted more from them. “Not that I speak in respect of want” (v. 11).

In the corrupt heart of man, the very expression of gratitude may be an oblique hint that further favours would not be amiss. The Apostle cuts off all thought of this by the words, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” This is not indigenous to human nature. Even Paul may not always have known it; he had learned it. “I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound.” v. 12. His experience had known betimes what it was to be in absolute want, as he knew what it was to have want of nothing. “Everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer. I can do all things through him [the true reading] who strengtheneth me.” A wonderful thing for a man in prison to say, one who apparently was in most abject circumstances, and in no small danger — unable to do anything, men would say. But faith speaks according to God, and the man who can do nothing in the judgment of his fellows, is the very one who could say he had strength for all things in Him that strengthened him (v. 13).

When the world comes into collision with a Christian, when it criminates, robs, and imprisons him, when the Christian is evidently as happy as before, the world cannot but feel it has come into contact with a power that is entirely above its own. Whenever it is not so, we have failed. What the world should find in us, under all circumstances, is the expression of Christ and His strength. It is not merely when the trial comes that we should go to the Lord and spread out our failure before Him; we ought to be with Him before it. If we wait for the trial, we shall not stand. In our Lord’s case you will

find that where there was victory in the power of faith, our Lord went through the suffering before it came. He went through it with God, yet no one felt trial as He. This therefore does not make the suffering less, but the contrary.

Take the garden of Gethsemane as an instance. What saint but our Lord ever sweated drops of blood in the prospect of death? Hence others may have entered into it in some little degree; and the measure has always been the power of the Spirit of God giving them to feel what is contrary to God in this world; for in this world whoever loves most suffers most. But here was one who had suffered much, who knew rejection as few men ever knew it, who had found the world's enmity as it is the lot of not many to prove. And yet this man, under these circumstances, says he has strength for all things through Him who strengthened him. Be assured that a blessed strengthener is near every one who leans upon Him. Paul does not speak here of apostolic privilege, but as a saint, a ground on which he can link himself with us, that we may learn to walk in the same path which he was treading himself. Having freely owned their love (in vv. 14-16), having shown that it was because he desired fruit that might abound to their account in verse 17, he closes all with this: "I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God." v. 18. And, marvelous to say, he is a giver himself. At any rate he counts upon One who would give everything that was needed in full supply. "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." v. 19.

What language from a man who had just been in want, and whose want had been supplied by these saints! Now he turns round and says, “My God shall supply all your need.” The God whose love and care and resources he had proved through all his Christian career — “my God,” he says, “shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” He is supplying the saints now according to all the wealth of His resources even in glory in Christ. There the shadow of a want will be unknown, but God is acting according to the same riches now. Therefore the Apostle breaks forth in praise to God forthwith. “Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever, Amen.” v. 20.

There is a notable change in phraseology. He says first, “My God shall supply all your need,” and afterward, “our God and Father.” When it is a question of experimental knowledge and confidence, he could not say “our God,” because they might not have the same measure of acquaintance with His love as he had who had proved and learned so profoundly and variedly what God is. But when he ascribes unto the ages of ages glory to God the Father, he cannot but join them fully with himself. “Now unto our God and Father be glory,” etc. His heart goes out to all believers. “Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.” v. 21. What a joy for those in Philippi to hear of brethren in unexpected quarters! The Apostle had gone to Rome to be tried before Caesar. Now, it appears, there were those of the imperial household who sent special salutation through the Apostle to the Philippians. “The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.” vv. 21, 22.

The heart gets wonderful relief in seeing the things that are lovely and of good report, and calculated to give our hearts confidence in the darkest day. Whatever the great trial of the present time (and never were there subtler snares or more imminent danger), there is no less grace in God, no less blessing to men in view of all. Let us not forget the word, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” v. 4. This epistle was not written as looking back upon the day of Pentecost, but for a time when the Apostle was cut off from helping the churches, and when the saints were warned that they must work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. But the trial is yet sharper for the spirit, if not bodily, for those who would walk with the Lord now. Let us not doubt His love, but be sure that God is above all circumstances. If God has cast our lot in these days, let us not doubt His goodness, but know that we may have as deep and even deeper joy because the joy is less in saints, less in circumstances, and more exclusively in Christ.

It was sin that hindered the Church’s blessedness in these ways and others; but since we have been called when and where we are now, may we eschew the unbelieving wish to exchange for any other. It is a question very simply of faith in God. He loves us and He cares for us. May our hearts answer to the perfections of His grace. While feeling the sorrow of the saints, of the gospel, of the Church more deeply, as all affects the glory of God, let us leave room in our hearts to count upon a known, tried God, who ever will be God, superior to all difficulties, foes, snares, and sorrows. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.” v. 23.

1 {I append here a note by W. J. Hocking as Mr. Kelly was attacked for this phrase, it having been taken out of context. References are made by WJH to Mr. Kelly's comments in 'The Christian Annotator' these can also be found on this CD. The references to Mr. Darby's comments on the subject can be found on the 'Darby Disk' from STEM Publishing. L.H. -

Christ Jesus Emptying Himself

In his Epistle to the Philippians Paul exhorts the saints to avoid all self-exaltation and to cultivate a spirit of humility (Phil. 2:1-4). The apostle does not press humility of disposition as a virtue in an abstract sense, but as a unique excellence perfectly exemplified by Christ Jesus. He writes, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God... emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form " (Phil. 2:5-7).

From this revelation by the Spirit of God concerning the incarnation of the Son of God we learn that its outstanding feature lay in His making Himself of no reputation, or emptying Himself, the latter being a preferable rendering of the Greek text.* The apostle teaches that Christ Jesus Who was in "the form of God" voluntarily took upon Himself "the form of a servant (or bond-slave)," whereby He "emptied Himself." Being "in the likeness of men," He abstained from using the prerogatives of His deity apart from the will of Him that sent Him. This act of self-abnegation expressed "the mind which was in Christ Jesus," which "mind" the apostle desired should be in His saints also.

*The comment of a great scholar on Phil. 2:7. is "emptied, stripped Himself of the insignia of majesty";

and again, “He divested Himself, not of His divine nature, for this was impossible, but of the glories, the prerogatives, of Deity. This He did by taking upon Him the form of a servant” (Commentary on Philippians, 12th ed., 1908, by Bp. Lightfoot.).

In connection with Christ’s self-emptying, a charge of heterodoxy has been brought against the late William Kelly, based, as it seems, upon a half-dozen words occurring in one of his early lectures on this Epistle. This charge of false doctrine is preposterous, but we hope is not as malicious as it is ill-founded. The words of W.K. quoted against him are: “He (Christ) emptied Himself of His deity.” And on the evidence of this brief sentence, it is declared that W.K. taught that on becoming man Christ ceased to be God, founding this serious accusation upon what is merely their own hasty interpretation of a brief sentence selected from the speaker’s somewhat lengthy expository remarks upon the Philippian passage (2:5-8).

Indeed, the falsity of this implication is evident even from the speaker’s remarks which precede the words quoted. Before using them, W.K. had made clear to his audience what he himself considered was conveyed by the passage he was expounding (2:5-8), and especially the sense of the phrase, “emptied Himself.” He taught his hearers that “emptied Himself” meant not that Christ Jesus in taking the form of a bond-servant thereby dispossessed Himself of His absolute deity, but of its prerogatives by abstaining from using these on His own initiative.

But on this point, we may let W.K. speak for himself. From the long passage (some five pages of print) dealing

with chap. 2:5-8 we have selected from the Notes the following extracts, dealing with the deity of Christ Jesus.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal (on equality) with God, but made Himself of no reputation (emptied Himself), taking a bondman’s form, being come in men’s likeness” (Phil. 2:5-7). What an illustrious testimony to the true, proper, intrinsic deity of Christ! It is all the stronger because, like many more, it is indirect (p. 46).... Nothing can be conceived more conclusively to prove is own supremely divine glory than the simple statement of the text,... Of Christ alone it was true that He took a bond-servant’s form; and of Him alone could it be true, because He was in the form of God. In this nature He subsisted originally, as truly as He received a bondman’s; both were real, equally real: the one intrinsic, the other that which He condescended to assume in infinite grace (p. 47)…

“Yet must we carefully bear in mind that it would be as impossible for a divine person to cease to be God as for a man to become a divine person. But it was the joy and triumph of divine grace that He Who was God equally with the Father, when about to become a man, did not carry down the glory and power of the Godhead to confound man before Him, but rather emptied Himself... He was God: yet in the place of man which He truly entered He had, as was meet, the willingness to be nothing. He made Himself of no reputation (emptied Himself). How admirable! How magnifying to God! He put in abeyance all His glory (pp. 47-8)....

“There are two great stages in the advent and humiliation of the Son of God. The first is in respect of

His divine nature or proper deity He emptied Himself. He would not act on a ground which exempted Him from human obedience when He takes the place of servant here below (p. 49).... But we find another thing; if He emptied Himself of His deity when He took the form of a servant, when He does become a man He humbles Himself and becomes obedient as far as death" (p. 50).

From these extracts it will be seen that W.K. maintained the full deity of Christ Jesus and also that His deity was unimpaired when He took manhood. Being in the form of God, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondman. Of His own will, He divested Himself of His prerogatives as God, choosing not to command as God but to obey as a servant. All the inherent rights of deity are His inalienably; obedience, however, is a function not of deity, but of one who takes the place of submission to the will of another. Being God, and being come in man's likeness, Christ Jesus undertook the place of servitude. "Though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). Yet He, "according to flesh, is the Christ, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (Rom. 9:5).

Such is the doctrine of scripture concerning Christ Jesus, and from this doctrine W.K. does not appear to depart even in the sentence over which some seem to have stumbled through lack of attention to its context. In his address, W.K. was at this point passing from the consideration of vv. 5-7 to ver. 8. In the former the subject is Christ's humiliation; as One in "the form of God," He takes "the form of a servant." In the latter, Christ further humbles Himself and is obedient as man even to crucifixion. Referring to this transition of subject, the lecturer said, "But we find another thing: if

He emptied Himself of His deity when He took the form of a servant (vv. 5-7), when He does become a man He humbles Himself and becomes obedient as far as death" (ver. 8). "Deity" and "man" are the two key-words in the two sections of this sentence, and the word "if" should be noted especially.

Obviously, W.K.'s teaching is not fairly represented by quoting only six words from this sentence, and also by omitting the little word "if." Thus, "He emptied Himself of His deity" is made to appear as an independent and absolute sentence, which it was not intended to be. The author did not say Christ did so, but "if" He did so. The speaker's object at this stage was to point out that in verse 7 Christ's humiliation is related to His deity, and in verse 8 to His humanity.

W.K. is not alone in this interpretation. The same distinction is pointed out by J.N.D. in his "Synopsis" of the passage. In similar language he states that as God Christ emptied Himself and as man He humbled Himself. He writes, "Christ… when He was in the form of God, emptied Himself, through love, of all His outward glory, of the form of God. and took the form of a man; and even when He was in the form of man, still humbled Himself. It was a second thing which He did in humbling Himself. As God, He emptied Himself; as man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient even unto death. His humiliation itself is a proof that He is God. God only could leave His first estate in the sovereign rights of His love. It is sin for any creature so to do" (pp. 468-9).

Deity is manifested by the exercise of its attributes and prerogatives. In His incarnation, these were suppressed by Christ, but were not abandoned, which could not be.

Hence Christ appeared among men as One Who had (to use W.K.'s phrase) "emptied Himself of His deity." As it were, He had laid aside His garments (His seamless robe) and girded Himself with a towel for menial service at the disciples' feet. His dis-robing did not affect His personal relationship to them as the Lord and the Teacher (John 13:14). When Christ Jesus emptied Himself for obedience, He was still God, for it could not be otherwise. But, if we may so speak, He was pleased that in His incarnation His deity should remain quiescent, and His bond-service appear.

In the wilderness after His baptism Christ Jesus was twice tempted by Satan to exercise His own deity and do what is impossible to man, though possible to God. But having emptied Himself for service and being there as bond-servant, He remained steadfast in His obedience to and compliance with His Father's will. Hence He neither made stones bread, nor cast Himself down from the temple to prove Himself to be the Son of God, which nevertheless He was, and is.

In the garden of Gethsemane Christ is seen to he the self-emptied One, choosing the Father's will, and not His own. There in agonized anticipation of the cup before Him, He cried, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I (emphatic) will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:39). Along with omniscient knowledge of what was before Him on the morrow, there was the display of the spirit, not of self-assertion and of escape, but of self-surrender and submission. He laid aside His own will, accepting His Father's, and on the cross doing that will, offering Himself to God in the sweet savour of His perfect obedience as Jehovah's Servant.

We conclude with three other quotations from J.N.D.'s ministry, all referring to Christ's emptying Himself in His incarnation: (1) "There are two degrees in Christ's humiliation. He first strips Himself of His own glory, and becomes man; then, being man, He goes down even unto the death of the cross;" (2) "He laid aside the form of Godhead, and was found as a man; and, being a man, He took upon Him the form of a servant;" (3) "Leaving God in the glory, leaving the form of God, in abeyance, He became a servant for the blessing of others." All three extracts are taken from his Collected Writings (Vol. 27 pp. 255, 274, 323). They all treat of the stoop of grace taken by Christ Jesus when He was found in fashion as a man, and all note the two stages in His humiliation as W.K. also indicates.

NOTE.-The following is a brief history of the phrase under consideration. It first appeared nearly a century ago in W. Kelly's "Notes on the Epistle to the Philippians" (The Bible Treasury. Vol. 5). The words in question occur in the article on pp. 283-4 (June, 1865). These notes being compiled from shorthand reports of W.K.'s oral ministry were issued in book form in 1867, and entitled "Lectures on the Epistle to the Philippians." Since that date, fresh impressions from the original have been published, without revision, as required.

In connection with W.K.'s phrase, "emptied Himself of His deity," it is interesting to record a remark of his on the same subject made some ten years previously and occurring in The Christian Annotator for the year 1855. in that journal (vol. ii. p. 91), a contributor, writing on the parables of the treasure and the pearl (Matt. 13:44-46) stated, "The man is He Who parted with all He had, even His Godhead, which He laid aside, and..

bought..” On p. 119 of the same volume, in criticizing this remark on our Lord’s renunciation. W.K. wrote, “Our Lord does not, and cannot, cease to be ‘over all, God blessed for ever.’“ As a result, on p. 158 the author of the remark “heartily” withdrew his original expression, substituting for “Godhead” the “glory of the Godhead.” He had spoken without due deliberation.

It will be observed that W.K., before using the phrase. “emptied Himself of His deity” had fully explained what it could not mean, viz., that Christ Jesus yielded up the possession of His deity or His Godhead, or His Essential Being, which is an impossibility. In His flesh He was still God, blessed for ever. Taking the form of a bond-slave, He thus emptied Himself, subjecting Himself absolutely to, the will of Another. For our sakes, “He being rich became poor”: an unsolved mystery to the understanding, but an amazing comfort and unending joy to the heart of faith.}