

Comments on the Epistle to the Philippians

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Introduction

THE PORTION THAT now comes before us might be termed the Epistle of Christian experience. It is not characterized by the unfolding of doctrine, as are the epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians: any doctrine that it contains is brought in incidentally and not as the main theme. It is characterized by a spirit of great intimacy — for there was a very strong bond of affection between Paul and the Philippian saints — and by many personal details being given. Thus it comes to pass that in it we are given an extraordinary insight into the Apostle's inner spiritual history that is most edifying. We are permitted to scrutinize his spiritual experience that we may understand what proper Christian experience is, and discover how marvellously it worked out in a man of like passions to ourselves. Under the most disadvantageous and depressing circumstances it was a triumph.

Chapter 1

IN OPENING, PAUL does not present himself as an apostle, but just as a bondman of Jesus Christ. Hence we are not to regard the experience which he is led to relate as being some-

thing apostolic, and therefore beyond the reach of ordinary Christians. On the contrary it is the experience of a bondman or servant, and we all are that. He addresses himself to those at Philippi who could be spoken of as "saints in Christ Jesus." Being in Christ they were set apart for God. They had bishops and deacons in their midst, but even so these are not mentioned in the first place. These men holding office in this local assembly had a place of importance and honour, but they were not lords over God's heritage, claiming in everything the first place. Moreover, instead of there being one bishop presiding over many churches there were several bishops in this one church.

Immediately after the opening salutation Paul puts on record his joyful remembrance of the Philippian saints. They had been peculiarly marked by fellowship in the Gospel. They had had Paul very much in their hearts (for so verse 7 should read) and they had stood by him as partners, all of which was proof of the work of God within them. God had by His Spirit begun a good work in them, which had been evidenced in this way; and what God had begun He would carry to completion, which would be reached in the day of Jesus Christ.

Evidently they were marked by a great love for the Gospel and hearty fellowship with it in a practical way, and not only with it but also with Paul who was its ambassador, and so they were partakers of his grace. And they were partakers not only as to the confirmation of the Gospel by the wonderful results it produced, but as to its defence against all adversaries, and as to the bonds in which the ambassador lay. Many there are who are eager to partake in the confirmation, and possibly in the defence, who are not so eager when bonds and afflictions are in evidence. Bonds are the test, and a readiness to partake in that connection is a surer proof of the work of God within than much erudition as to Christian doctrine.

Verse 8 assures us how fully Paul reciprocated all the affection of the Philippians, and indeed exceeded in it. Verses 9 and 10 show us that which was the desire of his heart for them, even that they should increase continually in love, intelligence, discrimination, purity and fruitfulness. There was much about them which was delightful, but the Apostle's desire is summed up in the words, "yet more and more."

While the work of God for us has been accomplished once and for ever by the Lord Jesus, the work of God in us by His Holy

Spirit is a progressive thing. That we should abound more and more in love is evidently the principal thing, for as we do our knowledge and powers of discrimination will increase. More and more we shall discern what is excellent and delight in it, and keep ourselves clear of all that would tarnish it, and consequently be filled with those fruits which are produced by righteousness to the glory and praise of God. Love is indeed the Divine nature. In that nature we are to grow as the result of God's work in us, which will continue to the end of our sojourn here, and be brought to fruition and into display when the day of Christ arrives.

When we reach verse 12 we find the Apostle beginning to refer to his own circumstances; but not as complaining or occupying our thoughts with them, but rather as showing how the God who is above all circumstances had made them work out to the furtherance of the Gospel.

What a blow it must have been to the early believers when Paul was imprisoned by the iron hand of Rome. A sudden extinguisher seemed to drop on his unparalleled labours and triumphs in the Gospel, and it must have appeared to be an unmitigated disaster. Yet it was nothing of the kind but rather the

reverse, and in the succeeding verses we learn the way in which God had overruled it for good.

It was distinctly to the good that things had so fallen out as to make it manifest that Paul's imprisonment was wholly on account of the Glad Tidings. From the highest circles in Rome to the lowest it had been made perfectly clear that his bonds were on account of Christ, and not those of an ordinary malefactor.

It was even more to the good that the most of the brethren had been stirred up in a right way by his captivity. Instead of being cast down and cowed by it they were moved to a fuller trust in the Lord, and consequently were more fearless in speaking forth the Word of the Lord. There was an unhappy minority who joined in the preaching from evil motives — for they were antagonistic to Paul and hoped to stir up more trouble for him — but at any rate they did preach Christ, and therefore God would overrule it for blessing.

Here then we get a striking glimpse of the inner life and spirit of the Apostle. His trials were very deep. Not only was his imprisonment likely to chafe his spirit, but the action of these envious and contentious brethren must have been irritating bey-

ond measure. Yet here he is, calm, confident, gracious, without a trace of irritation in his spirit: a veritable triumph of the power of God. And the secret of it was evidently that he had learned to forget himself and view things altogether from the Divine side. What weighed with him was not how things affected himself but how they affected Christ and His interests. It might be bad for Paul, but if it was good for Christ then nothing further need be said, for that was the only thing that mattered to him.

As a consequence of this the Apostle could say, "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." He rejoiced in the preaching of Christ, and he rejoiced in the assurance that all this which seemed to be so much against him would turn out to his own salvation; the Philippians helping by prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ being always available for him.

Verse 19 sets before us a present salvation and one which Paul himself needed and expected to get. The nature of it becomes clear as we consider verse 20. His earnest desire and expectation was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. The fulfilling of that desire would involve a salvation, for naturally we each aim at self-magnification and

self-gratification through our bodies. Have we each discovered that to have the whole bent and tenor of our lives diverted from self to Christ is a wonderful present salvation ? Have we ever prayed after this fashion? —

*"My Saviour, Thou hast offered rest,
Oh, give it then to me,
The rest of ceasing from myself,
To find my all in Thee!"*

Present salvation is found, then, in the setting aside of self and the exaltation of Christ, and not only salvation but also that which is really life. When the Apostle said, "For me to live is Christ," he was not announcing a fact of Christian doctrine but speaking experimentally. It is indeed a fact that Christ is the life of His saints, but here we find that the fact was translated into the experience and practice of Paul, so that his life could be summed up in one word — CHRIST. Christ lived in Paul and through Paul. He was the Object of Paul's existence, and His character was manifested in him, though not yet, of course, in perfect measure.

If life meant Christ living in Paul, death meant Paul being with Christ. Hence he adds, "to die is gain." To every Christian

death when it arrives IS gain, but it is very obvious that not many of us are in the abiding consciousness of that fact. When our loved ones who believe are taken from us, we console ourselves with the reflection that for them it means being with Christ, which is far better; yet we continue clinging to life in this world very pertinaciously ourselves. Have we ever been "in a strait betwixt two," as Paul was? The great majority of us would have no difficulty in deciding if the choice were left with us! We would elect at once for the alternative which is not spoken of as far better.

Death is gain, and Paul knew it to be gain; and he, be it remembered, had years before been caught up into the third heaven, though whether in or out of the body he could not tell. Whichever way it was, he was granted some foretaste thereby of the blessedness of being with Christ. We may take the words, "far better," as being Paul's own verdict as the fruit of that wonderful experience, as well as the revelation, as from God, of a wonderful fact.

When he says, "What I shall choose I wot not," we are not to understand that he was actually left to decide whether he was to live or die. At least, so we judge. He writes very familiarly

and with much freedom to his beloved Philippian converts, and hence does not stop to say, "if the choice were left to me." He knew that it was not merely better but far better to be with Christ, yet he does not decide the point by reference to his own feelings. We see again that the only thing that mattered was, what was most calculated to further the interests of his Lord. He felt that what would be for the more help of the saints was his remaining amongst them for a little longer, and hence he had the confidence of so doing, as he says in verse 25.

Let us all be quite clear that the departure of what the Apostle speaks here has nothing to do with the coming again of the Lord. He refers to the intermediate, or "unclothed," state, to which he refers in 2 Corinthians 5:4. In that passage he shows that the "clothed" state — when we are "clothed upon" with our bodies of glory is in every way superior to the "unclothed." Yet in our passage we see that the "unclothed" state is far better than the best that we can know while still clothed in our present bodies of humiliation. What it all means in detail must of necessity be inconceivable to us in our present condition, but let us rest assured that blessedness beyond all our thoughts lies ahead of us.

It would seem pretty certain that Paul was justified in his confidence, and that he did "abide and continue" with them for a few years further with a view to their spiritual progress and joy, and give them cause for further rejoicing by his coming amongst them for a brief season.

Only there was one great desire which he had as regards them, and that equally whether he was absent from them or present with them, that they should conduct themselves in a way that was worthy of the Gospel. Not only were they to stand fast; they were to "stand fast in one spirit." Not merely to strive for the faith of the Gospel, but to do so "with one mind," and "together."

Here is an apostolic injunction which may well strike very deeply and acutely into our hearts. It goes a long way to explain the lack of power manifested in connection with the Gospel, whether as regards its progress amongst the unsaved or as regards the stability of those who are saved. Standing fast, you notice, comes before the striving. And the word translated striving is one from which we derive our word, athletics. It would seem therefore to indicate not so much a striving by

word or argument in order to maintain the truth of the Gospel, as striving in the shape of actual labour on the Gospel's behalf.

In Romans 15:30 and in Jude 3 we have the words "strive" and "contend," but there a different word is used, from which we get our word, agonize. The saints were to agonize together in prayer with Paul, and to earnestly agonize for the faith. Here we are enjoined to labour (or, athleticize, if we may coin a word) together for the Gospel, and at the beginning of chapter 4 we read of two women who did so labour together with Paul, for the same word is used there. If there were more agonizing together in prayer, and athleticizing together on behalf of the Gospel we should see more in the way of result.

As we proceed further in the epistle we shall discover that this oneness of mind and spirit is the main burden that was resting on the Apostle as regards the Philippians, for dissension is an evil which has a way of creeping in amongst the most spiritual and devoted Christians in various subtle ways.

When dissension is banished and unity prevails among saints the adversaries do not appear so alarming, and there is more readiness to suffer. The fact is we never need be terrified by ad-

versaries of an open sort. The very fact that they are adversaries is to them only a token of destruction when God rises up. And when He rises up it will mean salvation for His people. While we wait for His intention it is ours to have conflict and suffering for His sake. The Philippians had seen it in Paul, as Acts 16 bears witness, and now they heard of the same kind of thing befalling him in Rome.

Suffering for Christ and His Gospel is here presented as a privilege, granted to us as believers. If we were not so sadly enervated by the dissension and disunity that prevails in the church, on the one hand, and by the inroads of the world and the spirit of the world, on the other, that is the light in which we should see it. And how immensely should we thereby be blessed!

Chapter 2

THE OPENING VERSE of chapter 2 appears to be an allusion to the supplies from the Philippians which had reached Paul by the hand of Epaphroditus. These gifts had been to him a very refreshing expression of the love and compassion that marked them, and of the true fellowship of the Spirit that existed between himself and them. As a result his heart had been filled

with consolation and comfort in the midst of his afflictions. Whilst recognizing however, the immediate application of this first verse, do not let us miss its more general bearing. Christ is the source of consolation; love it is that produces comfort; the Spirit of God, possessed in common by all true believers, is the fountainhead of fellowship. These facts abide in all ages, and for us all.

These things being facts, the Apostle uses them as a kind of lever in his exhortation. The "if," repeated four times in the first verse, has really the force of "since." Since these things are so, he begs them to fill up his joy to the brim by being like-minded and getting rid of the last vestige of dissension.

Experience proves, we think, that dissension is a work of the flesh which is amongst the last to disappear, and our passage shows how great was the desire of the Apostle that it might be removed from the midst of the Philippians. Note the variety of expressions he used in setting forth his desires for them.

First of all they were to be likeminded. It is obviously a great thing when believers all think alike, yet there is also to be considered the spirit that underlies their thinking. If that be wrong

mere thinking alike will not guarantee absence of dissension. Hence he adds, "having the same love." Only love can produce that of which next he speaks, "being of one accord," or, more literally, "joined in soul," which in its turn leads to all minding one thing.

When we reach Phil. 3 we shall find Paul saying "One thing I do." He was a man of one object, pursuing one thing, instead of frittering away his energies in the pursuit of many things. Here he exhorts others all to mind the one thing. Only the man, whose mind is centred on the one thing of all importance, is likely to be characterized by the pursuit of the one thing. It is not difficult to see that if we are all minding the one thing, under the control of the same love, there will not be much room for dissension.

Still, even so, the Apostle has yet more to say on this point. Verse 2 does indeed bring in the great positive elements that make for practical unity, but he will also labour to exclude the elements of evil that destroy it. Hence verse 3. It is very possible for us to do many things which are quite right in themselves in the spirit of strife, as we saw in considering chapter 1, where we read of brethren preaching Christ "of envy and

strife." Moreover, vainglory is an evil product of the flesh which lies very deeply ingrained in the fallen heart of man. How often have we done what was right enough, but with the secret desire of gaining credit and glory amongst our fellows? Let us give our consciences time to answer, and we shall feel the keen edge of these words.

Vainglory lies at the root of a vast proportion of the strife and dissension that is distracting Christians, even those who otherwise are spiritually minded. The opposite of vainglory is that lowliness of mind that leads us to esteem others better than ourselves. Lowliness of mind moreover leads to that largeness of mind which is indicated in verse 4. If I am self-centred, aiming merely at my own interests and glory, I naturally am only considering my own things. If on the other hand I am Christ-centred, aiming at His interests and glory, I look also on the things of others. And if the things of others are really more for Christ's glory than my things are, I shall look more on the things of others than on my own.

At this point the Apostle seems to anticipate that the Philippians might wish to say to him, "You have exhorted us to be of one spirit, of one accord, of one mind. But how are we to bring

it about? There is no denying the fact that differences of thought and judgment prevail amongst us. Whose mind is to prevail?"

His reply is, "Let this mind be in you" — the mind that was "in Christ Jesus." By "mind" here we have not to understand just a thought or opinion, but a whole way of thinking. Christ's way of thinking is to characterize us, and this is a very much deeper thing. If His way of thinking does characterize us we shall be delivered from dissension even though we do not see eye to eye on every point. Phil. 3:15-16 show this.

What then was the mind that was in Christ Jesus? We may reply in the three words that occur in verse 8, "He humbled Himself." The fact is that the mind that was in Christ is the exact opposite of the mind that was in Adam. The Lord's own words in Matthew 23:12 illustrate it. There was found in Adam the self-exalting mind, and as a consequence he fell into the depths. In Christ there was found the self-sacrificing, self-humbling mind, and, as we see in this passage, He is exalted to the supreme place.

We start from the supreme heights in verse 6. He was in the form of God. Our first parents were tempted to grasp at something far above them — at becoming as gods, as Genesis 3:5, bears witness. That place was not for them, and their grasping at it was sheer robbery. But there was nothing of that with our Lord. In His case equality with God was not something to be grasped at. It was His to start with, for He was God. He could not be higher than He was. Before Him there lay but the alternative of staying as and where He was, or of coming down in humiliation.

Blessed be God, He chose the latter. Verse 7 is the beginning of this wonderful story. Though originally in the form of God, He took upon Him another form, the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. This involved the making of Himself "of no reputation," or "emptying" Himself.

Years ago when the unbelieving critics of the Bible found themselves running into conflict with the words of our Lord, they invented the "kenosis theory" so as to be able to maintain their own denials of His words, while at the same time paying Him a certain measure of respect and homage instead of utterly rejecting Him as a fraud. Kenosis is a word coined from the

Greek word used in this passage, with the literal meaning of "emptied," but translated, "made ... of no reputation." The theory represents Christ as emptying Himself so fully of all that was divine that He became a Jew, just as ignorant as the majority of Jews living in His age. Hence the critic of the nineteenth or twentieth century, propounding this theory and fortified with modern learning, feels himself quite able to contradict or correct the Son of God.

Such is the kenosis theory — a web spun by the critical spiders out of their own unbelieving hearts; for they are the liars, and not the Son of God. A web which, sad to say, has served the devil's purposes only too well. Many an unwary fly has been trapped in that web. It has given them some kind of a reason for thinking exactly what they wanted to think.

Now while we turn away with abhorrence from the evil theory, we must not overlook the fact that there is a true "kenosis," a true emptying, for this passage speaks of it. If we desire to understand what it means we turn to the Gospels, and there we see what His Manhood involved, just as we also see what His Godhead involved, shining, as it did, continually through His

Manhood. Just two or three examples may be cited, to illustrate what we refer to.

Having become Man, Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. Consequently instead of acting in the simple strength of His own Godhead He acted in the power of the Spirit. It was a case of God doing things by Him (Acts 10:38; Luke 4:14; Acts 2:22).

He is the Creator, as Colossians 1:16 so plainly states, yet in Manhood He stated that places in the coming kingdom were not His to give (Matt. 20:23).

In keeping with this He disclaimed individual initiative or movement in His words and works. He attributed all to the Father (John 5:19, 27, 30; John 14:10).

Considering these things we at once see that this true emptying, which was His own act, was in order that His taking the form of a servant might be a real thing. Were it not for this we might have jumped to the conclusion that the words, "took upon Him the form of a servant," simply meant that He took a servant's place only as a matter of form, just as the Pope of Rome is said occasionally to assume the place of a servant in washing the

feet of certain poor beggars. He does it in form, but they see to it that in reality it is accomplished in surroundings of elegance and splendour. When our Lord Jesus took the servant's form, He took it in all the reality it involved.

Verse 8 carries the story of His humiliation to its climax. If verse 7 gives us the amazing stoop from Godhead's fullest glory to man's estate and place, this verse gives us the further stoop of the Man, who was Jehovah's Fellow, to the death of the cross. All His life was marked by going downwards, it was marked by an increasing humbling of Himself until death was reached, and that a death of extremest shame and suffering — the death of the cross.

His way of thinking then was to go down, and that way of thinking is to be in us. Only as born of God and possessing the Spirit of God is it possible for us to think in that way. Thank God, it is possible for us so to think. Then let us do so. The obligation rests upon us. Let us accept it, and let us judge ourselves by it.

The three verses which detail His humiliation are now followed by three which declare His exaltation according to the decree

of God the Father. Still He takes everything from the Father's hand, and is granted a Name which is absolutely supreme. In this passage "name" is used, we judge, in the same way as it is used in Hebrews 1:4. No particular name is referred to, whether Lord, or Jesus, or Christ, or any other, but it refers rather to His fame or reputation. The once despised and rejected Jesus has such fame and renown that ultimately every created being will have to bow before Him and confess His Lordship. And when an assembled universe does Him homage, whether they do it with glad willingness or with grief under compulsion, all will be to the glory of God the Father.

In verse 12 the Apostle leaves this delightful theme and returns to his exhortation, which began with Phil. 1:27. He longed that their manner of life might be in everything in keeping with the Gospel, that they might be marked by earnest labour for the Gospel with oneness of mind, and courage in the presence of opposition. In the past, when Paul had been in and out amongst them, they had been marked by obedience to what was enjoined. Now, let them be, if possible, even more obedient to his word since they were bereft of his personal help. Dangers threatened them from without, and there was this subtle danger

threatening from dissension within, let them then with redoubled energy seek to have and manifest the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Thus would they be working out their own salvation from all that threatened. Let them do it with fear and trembling, remembering their own weakness. Once Peter thought he could work out his own salvation without fear or trembling, and we know what came of that.

This evidently is the simple meaning of this much used, and abused, verse. Can we not each apply it to ourselves? We certainly can if we will. So may God make us willing to do so. We need not shrink from doing so in view of verse 13. We are to work out our own salvation, but it is God who works in us, to the willing and doing of His good pleasure. Let us note that. God works the willing as well as the doing, and the willing comes first. Thus God's work and our work are considered as moving harmoniously together. God's work must ever take precedence of ours both as to time and importance. Yet the thing is not presented in a way that would turn us into fatalists. Rather our working is mentioned first, and the responsibility as to it is pressed upon us. The fact that God works is brought in as an encouragement and incentive.

Thus, taught of God to love His will, we do it, and if the mind of Christ be in us we do it in the right way. Not grudgingly with murmurings and disputings, but as harmless and simple children of God, bearing the character of God, whose children we are. Mankind has become a crooked and perverted generation and we are to be living in a way that presents the sharpest possible contrast. Only thus shall we be lights amidst the darkness of this world.

The word translated "shine," is a word, we are told, which is used for the rising or appearing of the heavenly bodies in our skies. This gives us a striking thought. We should appear as heavenly luminaries in this world's sky. Are we doing so? Only if we are altogether distinguished from the generation of this world, as indicated in the earlier part of the verse. Only then can we effectively hold forth to others the word of life.

There must be life as well as the testimony of our lips if the word of life is to be held forth. The word of testimony most frequently becomes the word of life to others, when it has first been translated into the life of the witness. If that were accomplished in the case of his beloved Philippian converts, Paul would have the assurance that his labours on their behalf had

not been in vain. He then could anticipate abundant cause for rejoicing when Christ should appear and inaugurate His day. He could regard God's work in them, of which he had spoken in Phil. 1:6, as being carried to its crown and completion.

Having set before the Philippians the supreme example of the Lord Jesus, who was "obedient to death," and having exhorted them to obedience which would mean the doing of God's "good pleasure" from the heart, the Apostle again alludes to his own case in verse 17. Though he had expressed his anticipation of still continuing amongst them for a season (Phil. 1:25) yet here he contemplates the possibility of his speedy martyrdom. Some people set great store by their "impressions" and elevate them to a certainty and authority almost, if not quite, equal to the Scriptures. This is a mistake. Paul had his "impressions" as to his future, and we quite believe them to have been justified by the event. Yet even he, apostle as he was, entertained the thought that the event might falsify his impressions.

The word "offered" in verse 17 is "poured forth" as the margin shows. Paul uses the same word in 2 Timothy 4:6, when his martyrdom was impending. He alluded of course to those drink

offerings which the law enjoined. A "fourth part of a hin of wine" was to be poured over certain sacrifices, before the Lord.

This being so, two very striking things confront us in verses 17 and 18. First, he calls the gifts of the Philippians, sent out of their poverty by the hand of Epaphroditus, "the sacrifice and service of your faith." That is, he considers them to be the major sacrifice. His own martyrdom he considers as a small quantity of wine poured over their sacrifice as a drink offering: i.e. as the minor sacrifice. An extraordinary way of putting things surely! We should have reversed the matter, and thought of the self denial of the Philippians as a drink offering poured over Paul's great sacrifice as a martyr.

Why did Paul esteem things in this way? Because he was looking not "on his own things but ... also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4). He was a striking example of what he had urged on the Philippians, and of the worth and excellence of the mind which was in Christ Jesus. There was no affectation about Paul, no paying of mere compliments. Delighted with the grace of Christ as seen in his beloved converts, he meant what he said.

The second striking thing is that he actually contemplated his own martyrdom as calculated to provoke an outburst of rejoicing, for himself and for the Philippians — mutual rejoicing. A most unnatural proceeding truly! Not natural, but spiritual. The fact is, Paul REALLY believed what he had said as to departing and being with Christ. It really IS, "far better." He knew that the Philippians so truly loved him, that in spite of grief at losing him, they would rise above their own feelings to rejoice in his joy. We are afraid that we often turn Philippians 1:23, into a pious platitude. It was much more than that to Paul.

Still he was not anticipating martyrdom just at that moment, as he had already told them, and so he contemplated sending Timothy to them shortly, that he might help as to their spiritual state and also that through him he might hear of their welfare.

Now of those available just at that moment no one was quite so like-minded with himself, and so zealous for the good of the Philippians. The mass, even of believers, were characterized by seeking their own things rather than Christ's. Timothy was a happy exception to this. He was a true son of his spiritual father. The mind that was in Christ was also in him.

We are afraid that this seeking of our own interests and not Christ's is sadly common amongst believers today. No servant of God can so effectually serve the saints as he who moves amongst them seeking nothing but the interests of Christ.

So Timothy was the one he hoped to send to them before long, and indeed he hoped to be released and able to come himself. Still he wished for some speedier means of communication with them in acknowledgement of their gifts and so was dispatching back to them Epaphroditus, who had been their messenger to him, and who now became the bearer of the epistle we are considering.

We are now, verses 25-30, permitted to have a glimpse of the kind of man this Epaphroditus was, whom Paul calls, "My brother and fellow-workman and fellow-soldier" (N. Tr.). He too was like-minded, and we at once see that when just before the Apostle had said, "I have no man like-minded," he had meant, "I have no man amongst those who have been my immediate helpers and attendants in Rome." Epaphroditus was a Philippian and so not in view in the earlier remark.

Many there were, and are, who, though to be acknowledged as brothers, can hardly be spoken of as workmen or soldiers. Epaphroditus was all three, and not only so but a workman and a soldier thoroughly "fellow" to Paul. They worked and warred together with identical objects and aims. Could such testimony be rendered to anyone today? We believe it could, inasmuch as the New Testament informs us so fully as to the doctrine, manner of life, and service of Paul this pattern servant of God. At the same time we are afraid that in actual practice it is rare. Every believer is called to be a worker and a warrior. The trowel and the sword should mark us all. But do they? And are we characterized as "fellow" to Paul in our use of them?

In carrying out his service and journeying to Paul, Epaphroditus had nearly died of sickness. Twice over do we find the expression, "nigh to death." God indeed had had mercy upon him, and averted this great sorrow both to Paul and the Philippians, yet he had not regarded his life for the sake of the work of Christ, and hence was to be honoured.

So in Epaphroditus we see another who followed in the steps of Paul and Timothy, even as they followed Christ. The mind that was in Christ Jesus was found also in him, for not only did he

venture his life in order to serve his Lord, but when he had been so sick that he was near to death, he was "full of heaviness," not because of his own malady, but because he knew his brethren at Philippi had had news of his sickness and would be sorely grieved on his account. This was a fine case of a man not looking "on his own things, but ... also on the things of others." It was unselfishness indeed!

Chapter 3

THERE WAS REJOICING then both for Paul and for the Philippians as regards Epaphroditus; but as we enter upon chapter 3 we find where the truest and most permanent rejoicing lies for the Christian. God may, and indeed often does, give us to experience His mercy and make our hearts glad, yet on the other hand often He has to pass us through the valley of weeping. But even if circumstances are permitted to move against us, and sickness end fatally, the Lord Himself remains the same. Our rejoicing really lies in Him. "Rejoice in the Lord," is the great word for us all. In thus writing the Apostle might be repeating himself, yet the happy theme was not irksome to him, and it was safe for them. No servant of God need be afraid of

repeating himself, for we take in things but slowly. Repetition is a safe process in the things of God.

Our rejoicing however must be "in the Lord." There are those who would divert us from Him, as is indicated in verse 2. In saying "dogs" the Apostle probably alludes to men of quite evil life, akin to the unclean Gentiles. By "evil workers," to those who while professedly Christian were introducing what was evil. By "the concision" he refers to the Judaizing faction, in contrast with whom are the true "circumcision" of which verse 3 speaks. The word translated "concision" means a mere lopping off, in contrast to the complete cutting off of death, which was figured in circumcision. The Judaizers believed in lopping off the uglier excrescences of the flesh but would not have that bringing in of death, "by the circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2:11), which is the truth of Christianity. The object before the Judaizers was "that they may glory in your flesh" (Gal. 6:13). Men cannot exactly boast in the grosser manifestations of the flesh, so they aim at lopping them off in order to encourage more amiable and aesthetic manifestations in which to make their boast. But it is boasting in the flesh nevertheless.

Verse 3 speaks by way of contrast of what believers are, if viewed according to God's thoughts of them. We are the true spiritual circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, who boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in the flesh. We accept God's sentence of condemnation upon the flesh, and find our all in Christ. Then it is that in the energy of an ungrieved Spirit we are filled with the worship of God.

But what a lot of time is usually spent in learning not to trust the flesh, and in passing a "vote of no confidence" in it. What experiences often have to be gone through! The kind of experiences we refer to are detailed for us in Romans 7, and the lesson is one that cannot be learned theoretically, merely, it must be learned experimentally. There is no need that we should take a long time to learn the lesson, but as a matter of fact we usually do.

Paul's own case, to which he now refers — verses 4 to 7 — shows that the lesson may be learned in a very profound way in a very short space of time. If ever a man was exemplary in a fleshly way, he was. Nowadays people are said to die, "fortified with all the rites of the church." We may say of him that for some years he lived, fortified with all the rites and ordinances

and advantages and righteousness of Judaism. If ever educated and religious flesh was to be trusted, it was to be trusted in Saul of Tarsus. He was filled with religion and filled with the pride which was generated by his belief that all was so much gain to him.

But in that tremendous revelation, which occurred on the road to Damascus, all was reversed. He discovered himself to be outrageously wrong. His fancied advantages he discovered to be disadvantages; his religious flesh, to be rebellious flesh. All that he had counted on, trusted in, prided himself upon, came down about him with a crash. Christ in His glory was revealed to him. All that had been esteemed gain by him, he now counted loss for Christ. His confidence in the flesh was gone for ever. As soon as the three days of his blindness were over, his boasting in Christ Jesus began. In those three days his great lesson was learned.

And the lesson was learned solidly and for ever. Verse 7 speaks of the conclusion he reached on the Damascus road. "I counted" — the verb is in the past. Verse 8 carries us on to the day when he wrote this epistle in a Roman prison. "Yea doubtless, and I count" — the verb is in the present. The point reached at

his conversion is confirmed and even deepened, thirty years or more later. Only now he can say what in the nature of things he could not have said at his conversion. For thirty years he had been growing in the knowledge of Christ, and the excellency of that knowledge commanded him. Compared with that all things were but loss, and the depth and ardour of his devotion are expressed in the glowing words — "Christ Jesus MY LORD."

Nor was this counting of all things but loss merely an attitude of his mind, for he adds, "for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." It is one thing to count all things as loss, and quite another to actually suffer the loss of all. Both were the experience of the Apostle. He was not unduly disturbed when he lost everything, for he had already esteemed everything as loss. Moreover, in Christ he had infinite gain, in comparison with whom all else is but refuse.

It was not that he hoped to "win Christ" as the result of giving up all things, after the fashion of those who give up possessions and retire into monasteries or convents in the hope of thereby securing their soul's salvation. It was rather that, having found such surpassing worth in Christ, such excellence in the knowledge of Him, he was prepared as to all things to suffer loss in

order that he might have Christ for his gain. It was a remarkable form of profit and loss account, in which Paul emerged an infinite gainer.

All Paul's gain then could be summed up in the one word — CHRIST. But of course all this was based upon being "in Christ," and standing before God in that righteousness which is by faith in Him. Apart from that there would be no having Christ as one's gain, nor preparedness to suffer loss in this world.

How striking, in this 9th verse, is the contrast between "mine own righteousness" and "the righteousness which is of God." The one, were it possible to attain to it, would be "of the law." It would be something purely human, and according to the standard exacted by the law. The other is the righteousness in which we stand as the fruit of the Gospel. It is "of God;" that is, divine, in contrast to human. It is "through the faith of Christ;" that is, it is available for us on the basis of His intervention and work as presented to faith in the Gospel. And it is "by faith;" that is, it is received by us on the principle of faith and not on the principle of works of law.

Have we all taken this in? Are we rejoicing that we stand in a righteousness which is wholly divine in its origin? Do we realize that all the things of the flesh in which we might boast are so much loss and that all our gain is in Christ?

These are weighty questions that demand an answer from us each.

We may gain very considerable insight into the character of a man if we are made acquainted with his real desires and aspirations. The passage before us gives us just that insight into the character of the Apostle Paul. His desires seem to range themselves under three heads, all found in the great sentence which runs through four verses. There is no full stop from the end of verse 7 to the end of verse 11.

First, he desired to win Christ. Second, to be found in Christ, in a righteousness which is wholly divine. Third, to know Christ, and flowing out of that to know an identification with Christ, in resurrection, in sufferings, in death. We are conscious at once that this third aspiration has great depths in it. We might truly have Christ for our gain, and for our righteousness, and yet be very poor and shallow in our knowledge of Christ. "That I may

know HIM," seems to have been the very crown of Paul's desires.

But then, did not Paul know Him? Certainly he did, as indeed every believer knows Him. He knew Him in fact in very much larger measure than most believers know Him. Yet there is such an infinitude in Christ, such depths to be known, that here we have the Apostle still panting to know more and more. Have we not caught at least a little of the Apostle's spirit? Do we not long to know our Saviour better — not merely to know about Him, but to know Himself in the intimacy of His love?

Our knowledge of Christ is by the Holy Spirit, and primarily through the Scriptures. Had we been on earth in the days of His flesh, we might have been acquainted with Him for a brief season "according to flesh." But even so we should have to say, "yet now we know [Him thus] no longer" (2 Cor. 5:16, N. Tr.). When His disciples spent those brief years in His company they had indeed a most wonderful experience, yet at that time they had not received the Holy Spirit and hence they understood but very little for the moment. It was only when they had lost His presence among them, but had gained the presence of the Holy Spirit, that they really knew the significance of all

they had seen and heard. All that we know of Christ objectively is presented to us in the Scriptures, but we have the indwelling Spirit to make it all live in our hearts in a subjective way.

If the knowledge of the true living Christ, thus objectively presented to us, is brought subjectively into our hearts by the Spirit, it leads to a third thing; an acquaintance with Him in an experimental and practical way. To this Paul alludes in the latter part of verse 10. The order of the words is significant. The historical order in the case of our Lord was, sufferings, death, resurrection. Here resurrection comes first. Neither Paul nor any of us can contemplate sufferings or death save as we are fortified by the knowledge of the power of His resurrection. His resurrection is the pattern and pledge of ours. Indeed our resurrection altogether depends upon His.

As the Apostle realized in his spirit the power of Christ's resurrection, he looked upon "the fellowship of His sufferings" as something actually to be desired. He even desired to be conformed to His death! Until the Lord comes we can only know the power of His resurrection in an inward and spiritual way, yet the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death are of a very practical nature. Paul would taste of suffer-

ing in the cause of Christ and after the pattern of Christ — suffering which should be of the same order as those sufferings which Christ Himself endured at the hands of men. He would even die as a witness to the truth, seeing Christ thus died. He actually desired these things.

Let us each take a few quiet moments to interrogate our own hearts. Do we desire these things? We fear that to ask the question is to answer it. A few of us might be able to say, "I believe that through the Lord's grace I could face these things if called upon to do so. But desire them? Well, no." The fact that Paul did desire them is an eloquent witness to the wholly exceptional degree in which Christ personally had captured his heart, and the power of His resurrection had filled him with a holy enthusiasm. The fact is, he was like a well-trained athlete running in an obstacle race with a mighty enthusiasm for reaching the goal. The earlier verses have told us how he had flung away seeming advantages as being hindrances to his course. These verses tell us that he would be detained by no obstacle, he would tear his way through the barbed wire of suffering and plunge into the watercourse of death, if in such fashion he might reach his goal.

Now this is just the force of verse 11. The Authorized version would almost make it appear that resurrection is an attainment for us, with a measure of doubt as to whether we ever get there. A better rendering is, "If any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead" (N. Tr.). He would get there any way, through no matter what obstacles, even through sufferings and martyrdom. And not merely is it resurrection, but resurrection out from among the dead; that is, the first resurrection, of which Christ is the firstfruits. It is while waiting for that resurrection that we are to know the power of His resurrection from among the dead, and so be walking here as those who are risen with Christ.

Verses 12 to 14 show us that the thought of a race was present to the Apostle's mind in writing. The word, "attained" in verse 12 is really "obtained" or "received" as a prize. He wished no one to think that he had already received the prize, or that he was perfected. The position rather was that he was still pursuing it. Christ Jesus had laid hold of him, but he had not yet laid hold of it. Still he was ardently in pursuit of it, stretching out like an eager athlete towards the prize of God's calling on high in Christ Jesus.

The word "high" simply means "above." The same word is used in Colossians 3:1, where we are bidden to "seek those things which are above." The prize, of the calling to the things above, is surely that full and perfect knowledge of Christ Himself, which will be possible for us when our bodies are changed and fashioned like to His body of glory at His coming.

Paul thirsted to know Him yet more deeply, as we have seen, while still he ran the race with the prize of a full knowledge of Him at the end. His desire was so intense that it made him a man of one thing. He was marked by concentration and intensity of purpose, suffering nothing to divert him from his aim. This feature, of course, goes far to explain the amazing power and fruitfulness that characterized his life and ministry. The weakness and lack of fruit that so often marks our lives and ministry may be very largely traced to exactly opposite features in ourselves — lack of purpose and concentration. Time and energy are frittered away on a hundred and one things of no particular value or moment, instead of the one thing commanding us. Is it not so? Then let us seek mercy from the Lord that in an increasing measure we may be able to say, "One thing I do."

This really is very much what verse 15 says. Paul rejoiced in the knowledge that others beside himself could be spoken of as perfect or full-grown in Christ: they would be like-minded with him in this matter. Others again had hardly made the same spiritual progress, and consequently might view things somewhat differently. These are exhorted to walk in the same way according to their present attainment, with the assurance that God would lead them on until they saw things in just that way in which they had been revealed to the Apostle himself. We need to take these two verses very much to heart, for they exemplify the way in which the more spiritual and advanced believer should deal with those of lesser attainments than himself. Our natural tendency is to look down on these who may be less advanced than ourselves, to despise them or even to attack them because of their lack of conformity to that which we see to be right. This tendency is specially pronounced when the advance, upon which we rather pride ourselves, is more a matter of intelligence than of real spirituality.

Verses 15 and 16, then, reveal the spirit of a true pastor in Paul; and in verse 17 we find that he is able to refer them to his own

life and character as an example. One is reminded of the words in which one of the poets has described the pastor. He

*"... allured to brighter worlds
And led the way."*

In verses 15 and 16 we see Paul alluring his weaker brethren to brighter worlds. In verse 17 we see him leading the way. Example is, as we know, an immense thing. Paul could say to the Philippians as he did to the Ephesians at the close of his ministry, "I have shewed you and have taught you" (Acts 20:20). With him there was practice as well as doctrine.

For this reason he could call upon his converts to be "followers" or "imitators" of himself. He was to be an "ensample," that is a type or model for them, and this was the more necessary since even in those early days there were many walking in such fashion as to deny what is proper to Christianity, though evidently they still claimed to be within the sphere of Christian profession. Here we have brought before us not immature believers, as in verse 15, nor believers in a very perverse frame of mind, as in Phil. 1:15, but adversaries whose end is destruction. These are exposed with great vigour of language.

We must not fail to notice the spirit that characterized the Apostle in denouncing them. There was nothing petty or vindictive about him, but rather a spirit of compassionate grief. He wept even as he wrote the denunciation. Moreover, his care for the Philippians was so zealous that he had often warned them before as to these men.

His exposure falls under five heads.

1. They are enemies of the cross of Christ. Not perhaps of His death, but of His cross — of that cross which has before God put the sentence of death on man, his wisdom and his glory.
2. Their end is destruction. This alone would make Paul weep as he thought of them.
3. Their god is their belly; that is, their own lusts and desires governed them: desires often of a gross nature, though, we suppose, not always such. Always however, in some shape or form, self was their god.
4. They gloried in that which was their shame. They had no spiritual sensibilities at all. Everything in their minds was inverted. To them light was darkness and darkness light: glory was shame and shame was glory.

5. Their minds were set on earthly things. Earth was the sphere of their thoughts and their religion. They carried on the tradition of those of whom the Psalmist spoke, saying, "They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth" (Ps. 17:11).

And that tradition is still being carried on vigorously. The generation of earth-mincers still flourishes. It has indeed multiplied amazingly within Christendom. The unbelievers who fill so many pulpits that are supposed to be Christian, and control the destinies of so many denominations, have an incontestible claim to this un-apostolic succession. The cross of Christ as pouring contempt on man's pride and abilities they will have none of. Man — that is to say, self — is their god. They glory in things, such as their descent from the brute creation, which if true would only be to their shame. Earth fills their vision. Believers of the old-fashioned, New Testament type they ridicule as being "other worldly." They are altogether for this world.

Now, "our conversation is in heaven." It is really our commonwealth, our citizenship. Our vital associations are there, not here, as the enemies of the cross would teach. Heaven is our fatherland, and to heaven, as a matter of fact, we are going. But

before we get there a great change as to our bodies is needed, and that change will reach us at the coming of the Lord. Our bodies of humiliation are going to be transformed into the likeness of His body of glory, and the working of His mighty power is needed for its accomplishment.

So our attitude is that of looking for the Saviour, who is coming forth from the heavens, to which we belong. He is coming as One who wields a power which will enable Him to ultimately subdue all things to Himself. Is it not a touching thought that the very first exercise of that power of His is going to be in the direction of subduing the poor bodies of His saints, whether living or in the graves, into conformity to Himself? Then in His likeness we shall enter upon all that our heavenly citizenship involves.

So, we look for the Saviour. Let us keep the eyes of our hearts directed to the heavens, for the next move of decisive importance is coming from thence.

Chapter 4

THERE ARE TWO words in the first verse which direct our thoughts to what has gone before: "Therefore" and "so." We are to stand fast in the Lord therefore, that is, because of, or in view of, what has just been stated. Well, what has been stated? Our heavenly calling, our heavenly citizenship, our expectation of that body of glory, fashioned like to Christ's in which we shall enter into our heavenly portion. No uncertainty here! And no disappointment when the moment of realization comes! We may well stand fast in the Lord!

But we are to stand fast so, that is, in like manner to the way in which Paul himself stood fast as delineated in chapter 3. We are to be "followers together" of him, and have him "for an example," as he told us. If we too find in the knowledge of Christ an excellency that far outshines all else, we shall indeed "stand fast in the Lord." Our affections, our very beings will be so rooted in Him that nothing can move us.

As we have previously noticed the adversary was attempting to mar the testimony through the Philippians by means of dissension. In verse 2 we discover that at the moment the trouble largely centred in two excellent women who were in their

midst. The Apostle now turns to them, naming them with the entreaty that they be of the same mind in the Lord. The three words emphasized are of all importance. If both came thoroughly under the domination of the Lord, having their hearts set for Him as Paul's was, differences of mind, which existed at that moment, would disappear. The mind of Euodias as to the matter, and Syntyche's mind, would disappear and the mind of the Lord would remain. Thus they would be of the same mind by having the Lord's mind.

Verse 3 appears to be a request to Epaphroditus, who was returning to Philippi bearing this letter, that he would help these two women in the matter, for they had been in the past devoted labourers in the Gospel along with the Apostle himself, Clement and others. If they could be helped the main root of dissension would be removed.

With verse 4 we come back to the exhortation of the first verse of Phil. 3. There we were told to rejoice in the Lord. Here we are to rejoice in the Lord alway; for nothing is to be allowed to divert us from it. Further, he emphasizes by repeating the word, that we are to rejoice. We are not merely to believe and to trust, we are also to rejoice.

This leads to the consideration of things that would hinder our rejoicing in the Lord. The harsh unyielding spirit that always insists on its own rights is one of these things, for it is a fruitful source of discontent and self-occupation. In contrast thereto we are to be characterized by moderation and gentleness, for the Lord is near and He will undertake our cause.

Then again there are the varied testings and worries of life, things which have a tendency to fill our hearts with anxious care. In regard to these prayer is our resource. We should mingle thanksgivings with our prayers, for we should ever be mindful of the abundant mercies of the past. And the scope of our prayers is only limited by the word, "everything."

This scripture invites us to turn everything into a matter of prayer, and freely make known our requests to God. There is no guarantee, you notice, that all our requests will be granted. That would never do for our understanding is very limited and consequently we often ask for that which, if granted to us, would be neither to the glory of our Lord nor to our own blessing. What is guaranteed is that our hearts and minds shall be

guarded by the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding. Again and again when Christians have passed through trials, from which they had in vain requested to be exempted, we find them looking back and saying, "I am a wonder to myself. How I could have passed through so heavy a trial, and yet have been lifted above it into such serenity, I cannot understand."

"The peace of God," must be distinguished from "peace with God," of which we read in Romans 5:1. That is the peace in relation to God, which comes from the knowledge of being justified before Him. This is the peace, in character like to God's own peace, which fills our hearts when having committed everything to Him in prayer, we trust in His love and wisdom on our behalf, and consequently have anxious care as to nothing.

It may also be helpful to distinguish between prayer as presented in this passage and as presented in John 14:13-14. There the Lord was speaking more particularly to the Apostolic band, in their character as the representatives that He was leaving behind Him in the world, and He gives them plenary powers as regards prayer in His Name. The force of "in My Name," is "as My representatives." This praying in His Name is a tremend-

ously responsible and solemn thing. Every cheque drawn really in His Name on the Bank of Heaven will be honoured. Only we must be very careful that we do not draw cheques for purely personal purposes of our own, under cover of drawing in His Name. That would be a kind of misappropriation of trust funds! And let us remember that in the Bank of Heaven there is a penetrating vision which can infallibly discriminate between the cheque which is genuinely in His Name and the one which is not.

Still, though there are a thousand and one matters in our lives that we could hardly present to God in prayer as being directly connected with the Name and interests of Christ, yet we have full liberty to present them to God, and indeed are bidden to do so. As we do so we may be in the enjoyment of the peace of God. We may be anxious as to nothing, because prayerful as to everything, and thankful for anything.

Anxious care being driven out of our hearts there is room for all that is good to come in. Of this verse 8 speaks. One can hardly exaggerate the importance of having the mind filled with all that is true and pure and lovely, the highest expression of which is found in Christ. Our lives are so largely controlled

by our thoughts, and hence it says, "As he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). Hence to have our minds filled with what is true and just and pure is like a high road leading to a life marked by truth and justice and purity. We have of necessity to come into contact with much that is evil, but needlessly to occupy ourselves with it is disastrous, and a source of spiritual weakness.

But if the supreme and perfect expression of all these good things was found in Christ, there was also a very real exhibition of them in the life of the Apostle himself. The Philippians had not only learned and received and heard them, but also seen them in Paul, and what they had seen they themselves were to do. To DO, notice, for the excellent things that fill our minds are to come into practical display in our lives. Then indeed the God of peace shall be with us, which is something beyond the peace of God filling our hearts.

With verse 10 the closing messages of the epistle begin, and Paul again refers to the gift which the Philippians had sent him. That gift had been a cause of great rejoicing to him in his imprisonment. He knew that he had not been out of their thoughts, but they had not had opportunity to send help until

this occasion of the journey of Epaphroditus. It had now arrived most opportunely; yet his joy was not primarily because it relieved him of privation, as the beginning of verse 11 shows, but because he knew it meant more fruit towards God, which would be to their credit in the coming day, as verse 17 shows.

Speaking of want or privation leads the Apostle to give us a wonderful insight into the way in which he faced his sufferings and imprisonment. These tragic circumstances had become to him a fountain of practical instruction, for he had learned to be content. To be content in present circumstances, no matter what they be, was not natural to Paul any more than it is to us. But he had learned it. And learned it, not as a matter of theory, but in experimental fashion by passing through the most adverse circumstances, with his heart full of Christ, as we see in chapter 3. Hence he was able to face changes of the most violent sort. Abasement or abounding, fulness or hunger, abounding or acute privation, all was the same to Paul, for Christ was the same, and all Paul's resources and joys were in Him.

In Christ Paul had strength for all things, and the same strength in the same way is available for every one of us. If only we exploited all that is in Christ for us we could do all things. But

Paul did not simply say, "I could," but rather, "I can." It is easy to admire the wonderful fortitude, the serene superiority to circumstances which marked the Apostle, and it is not difficult to discern the source of his power, but it is another thing to tread in his steps. That is hardly possible except we go through his circumstances, or similar ones. Here it is that our weakness is so manifest. We conform to the world, we lack spiritual vigour and aggressiveness, we avoid the suffering, and we miss the spiritual education. We cannot say, "I have learned ... I know ... I am instructed ... I can do," as Paul could. It is just as well that we should candidly face these defects that mark us, lest we should think that we are "rich and increased with goods," that we are picked Christians of the twentieth century, and consequently as to "spiritual intelligence" almost the last word as to what Christians ought to be.

The Apostle then was not in any sense dependent on the gifts of the Philippian saints or of others, and he would have them know it; yet though this was so he assures them, and that in a very delicate and beautiful way, that he was fully alive to the love and devotion both towards the Lord and himself that had prompted their gift. He recognized that the Philippians peculi-

arly shone in this grace, and had done so from the first moment that the Gospel had reached them. They had thought of him in the past, when no other assemblies had done so, both in Macedonia and Thessalonica, and now again in Rome.

The devotion of the Philippians in this respect was heightened by the fact that they were very poor. We are enlightened as to this in 2 Corinthians 8:2. They also had been in much affliction themselves, and they had experienced much joy in the Lord. All this is very instructive for us. Oftentimes we are unsympathetic and stingy because our own experiences both of suffering and spiritual refreshment are so very shallow.

Having received of their bounty through Epaphroditus, Paul would have them know that now he had a full supply and was enjoying abundance. But their gift had not only met his need, it was in the nature of a sacrifice acceptable to God, like to those sacrifices of a sweet smelling odour of which the Old Testament speaks. This was a greater thing still.

But what of the Philippians themselves? They had further impoverished themselves, further reduced their already slender resources by their gifts in favour of an aged prisoner who could

in no wise reciprocate or help them. Paul felt this and in verse 19 he expresses his confidence as to them. God would supply all their need. Notice how he speaks of Him as, "My God," — the God whom Paul knew and had practically tested for himself. That God would be their Supplier, not according to their need, nor even according to Paul's ardent desires on their behalf, but according to His own riches in glory in Christ Jesus. It would have been a wonderful thing had God engaged to supply them according to His riches on earth in Christ Jesus. His riches in glory are more wonderful still. The Philippians or ourselves may never be rich in the things of earth and yet be enriched in the things of glory. If so we shall indeed respond, in attributing glory to God our Father for ever and ever.

It is interesting to note in the closing word of salutation that there were saints found even in Caesar's household. The first chapter told us that his bonds had been manifested as being in Christ in all the palace, and if in all the palace even to Caesar himself, we suppose. But with some of his attendants and servants things had gone further than that, and they had been converted. In a great stronghold of the adversary's power souls had

been translated from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Such triumphs does grace effect! How fittingly comes the closing desire, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

