

The Epistle to the Philippians

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Introductory.

In the Epistle to the Philippians the Christian is viewed as a heavenly pilgrim, passing through this world on his way to Christ in glory. In the Apostle Paul we have an example of one who treads this heavenly path according to the mind of God. As he pursues his pilgrim way he is called to suffer bonds and imprisonment, and face the realities of life and death. He is opposed by adversaries, endures persecutions, and suffers the loss of all things. He walks through a dark world in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. He meets with sickness and sorrow. He has to contend against dogs, evil workers, and the concision. He mourns over those who seek their own things, and weeps over the enemies of the cross of Christ. At times he is faced with want and privations.

Nevertheless, in spite of all difficulties, he forgets the things that are behind and reaches out to the things that are before. At every step of this path he is sustained by having in view the glorious end of the journey — the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.

Moreover the epistle presents not only the pilgrim path, but also the experiences that are enjoyed by one who takes this path. Such experience is true Christian experience, though not necessarily the experience of Christians. Alas! the experience of Christians is often far below proper Christian experience. The Christian may at times be depressed in mind, dull of spirit, and cold at heart. Obviously such experiences are not proper Christian experience. The epistle very blessedly presents *the experience enjoyed by one who, in his journey through this world, lives the Christian life in its normal condition under the power of the Spirit of God.*

We know that the Spirit of God has come to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. Thus Christ is formed in us by being presented to us as our Life, our Pattern, our Object, and our Power. As we become followers of Christ, according to the example of the apostle, so shall we become true representatives of Christ, and enjoy true Christian experience.

In Philippians 1 Christ is presented as our life, and consequently everything is viewed in connection with Christ. The key word is "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1: 21).

In Philippians 2. Christ is presented in humiliation as our pattern, giving grace to the Christian

life. The key word is "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2: 5).

In Philippians 3. Christ is presented in glory as our object, giving energy to the Christian life. The key word being "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3. 14).

In Philippians 4. Christ is presented as our power, lifting us above the cares and anxieties of the pilgrim path. The key word is "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4. 23).

For at least four years Paul had been a prisoner and, in the ways of God, allowed to suffer want. Hearing of his need the hearts of the Philippians were moved to send a gift. This gift drew forth from the apostle this touching letter of acknowledgment. He writes the epistle not as an apostle, but as a servant of Jesus Christ, associating Timothy with himself. Thus the experience of which he speaks is not simply apostolic, but that which is proper to all Christians.

Philippians 1.

Christ our life.

In the first chapter Christ is viewed as the source and motive of the Christian life lived on earth. Paul can write, "For me to live is Christ." Others might well shrink from publicly stating, "For me to live is Christ," though it may indeed be the desire of the heart. Paul, as led by the Spirit, could say this in all truth. As the man of the world lives for money, or pleasure, or fame, and the loss of these things would deprive him of his object in life; so Paul lived solely for Christ, and had it been possible to rob him of Christ he would have had nothing left for which to live.

It is plain that a man's life is governed by, and viewed in connection with, that which is his object in life. If he lives for money, everything will be viewed in connection with money. If pleasure, everything will be viewed in connection with pleasure. Other things may at times demand his attention, but that which is his life will dominate his thoughts and actions. Nor is it otherwise with the Christian. If, as Paul can say, "For me to live is Christ," it will mean in practice that *everything in Paul's life will be viewed in connection with Christ and His interest.*

The natural man lives for self, and views everything in connection with self. It is the privilege of the believer to know that, in the cross of Christ, God has dealt with "self," so that we need not be occupied with "self" any more. Our old man has been crucified with Christ and thus we have a title to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin. This reckoning is the foundation of practical Christianity, involving as it does the entire setting aside of the old man in the judgment of the cross, and the introduction of a new man in a new world, Christ in the glory.

Alas! our experiences as Christians are often low because we view things in relation to ourselves. The true Christian experience as set before us in this chapter is the result of seeing everything in connection with Christ. This is strikingly set forth in the case of the Apostle Paul. Everything he touches upon in this opening chapter is viewed in relation to Christ.

1. The Gift of the Philippians (Verse 5).

After the introductory verses the apostle at once refers, in an indirect way, to the gift sent by the Philippians, in which he sees a fresh expression of their fellowship. Christ, however, being his life, he views this gift not in connection with himself, but in relation to the gospel of Christ. Hence he speaks of this gift as "fellowship in the gospel." Had he thought only of himself he would have said

"fellowship with me." Forgetting himself and his immediate needs, he sees in it a proof of the Lord's grace working in the Philippians.

2. The Philippian Assembly (Verse 6).

The gift leads the apostle to think of those who had given the gift. Christ being his life, he views the Philippians, as before he had viewed their gift, in connection with Christ. Viewing them thus he can say, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Viewing the saints in connection with the flesh that is in them, the world that is around them, the Devil who is against them, or the difficulties opposed to them, we may well be cast down in regard to them. When for a moment the apostle thought of the Galatian saints in connection with their ways, he has to say, "I stand in doubt of you." Directly, however, he views them in connection with Christ, he can say, "I have confidence as to you through the Lord" (Gal. 4: 20; 5: 10).

So with the Philippians, viewing them in connection with Christ, he can speak of "being confident" that the work commenced in them will be finished in the day of Jesus Christ.

3. The Love of the Apostle (Verses 7, 8).

Thinking of the Philippians naturally leads the apostle to speak of his love for them. He can say, "God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." Moreover, Christ being his life, this love to the Philippians is viewed in connection with Christ. He does not long after them with mere human affection which waxes and wanes according to the way others may act, but with deep divine affection — the bowels of Jesus Christ; a love that, having loved, loves to the end.

4. The Prayer of the Apostle (Verses 9-11).

Those we love, we pray for. So with the apostle: loving the Philippians he prays for their state of soul, that their love may abound yet more and more. If, however, he prays for their state, he does so in connection with Christ. He does not pray for a good state in connection with himself, that they may be a credit to him; or that they may accredit themselves before men, in man's small day. He prays for them in view of the day of Christ. Furthermore he desires that their lives might be filled with the fruit of practical righteousness. This, however, he at once connects with Christ, for such practical fruits can only be by Jesus Christ. Nor does the apostle desire these fruits that he may be praised, or the Philippians praised, but for the glory and praise of God.

5. The Circumstances by the Way (Verses 12-14).

Counting upon their loving interest in himself, the apostle passes from the Philippians to speak of himself and his circumstances. Again we see that, Christ being his life, he views his circumstances in connection with Christ and His gospel. He says, "I would have you to know, brethren, that the circumstances in which I am have turned out rather to the furtherance of the glad tidings" (N.T.). The circumstances were such as to make the stoutest heart quail. For four years he had been a prisoner in bonds under the rule of the tyrant Nero; he was no longer able to minister in the assemblies, or preach to the crowds. Had he viewed his circumstances in connection with himself he might well have been cast down, and possibly have reproached himself for actions in the past which might have led to his imprisonment. Rising above all considerations of self — whether lack of wisdom in the past, or ease and comfort in the present he views his circumstances entirely in connection with Christ. He does not ask, "How do these untoward circumstances affect me?" but, "How do they further the interests of Christ?" Viewing them thus he sees that God is above all circumstances, even if brought about largely by our own mistakes, and makes the most unpropitious circumstances, as nature would think, turn to the furtherance of the gospel. Viewing circumstances in the light of Christ and His interests, they

become the occasion of experiencing joy in the Lord — as he says, "I herein do rejoice, and will rejoice."

6. Contentious Brethren (Verses 15-18).

Not only, however, has Paul to meet untoward circumstances, but he has to deal with contentious brethren. There were such in Paul's day, and there are such in our day — men who take up service with impure motives. How are they to be viewed? Had Paul viewed such in relation to himself, he might well have been indignant, for he knew full well that they were hoping to add affliction to his bonds. In the presence of Paul they would have been silent; now that he is absent they give expression to their envy by making themselves prominent, thinking thus to belittle Paul and magnify themselves. Paul, however, refuses to view them in connection with himself, and thus their efforts to annoy Paul entirely fail. For Paul to live was Christ, and hence he views the action of these men in connection with Christ, with the result he sees clearly that, whatever their motive, "Christ is preached." This again leads to Christian experience. "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

7. The Present Salvation of the Apostle (Verse 19).

Here the apostle passes on to speak of the deliverance from all the ill effects of trying circumstances and contentious brethren. The latter thought to arouse tribulation for the apostle (verse 17, N.T.). "No," says the apostle, "through your prayers all will turn out to my salvation." He will be delivered from being cast down because of his bonds, and from self-confidence, as if the work entirely depended upon the apostle. But this salvation from perils that beset his soul he connects with Jesus Christ. It will come through the gracious supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

8. The Mortal Body (Verse 20).

From the perils that beset his soul, he passes on to speak of his body. If he thinks of his body, his thoughts are not engrossed with feeding and clothing it, or devising means to minister to its comfort. This indeed would be to think of his body in connection with himself. For Paul to live is Christ, therefore he thinks of his body in connection with Christ, and hence his "earnest expectation" is "that Christ shall be magnified" in his body. For Paul his body was only a vessel in which to set forth Christ.

9. Life and Death (Verses 20-26).

The apostle faces the great realities of life and death. He speaks of the life lived on earth. Had he viewed this life as a natural man, with all his great abilities, advantages of birth and education, it would have appeared to be full of possibilities and dazzling prospects. Christ, however, being his life, he entirely refuses to view the life here in connection with himself, and can say, "For me to live is Christ."

Then death passes before him. To the natural man death is the king of terrors and the terror of kings, being the loss of all things that men count dear. Viewing death in connection with Christ it no longer held any terror for the apostle, and entailed no loss. Indeed, he can say "to die is gain," for "to depart" is "to be with Christ." The man who makes money his object would not find death 'a gain. He would not gain more of his object by death; he would lose all that for which he had lived, for shrouds have no pockets. If Christ is the object, then death is gain, for by death more of that blessed object would be gained, and by death all things that hinder the enjoyment of Christ would be removed.

If, however, Paul is to abide for a while in this life and continue with the saints, it would be for their "furtherance and joy of faith." He still thinks only of Christ. He has no thought of continuing in order that the saints may rejoice in Paul through Jesus Christ, but that they may rejoice "in Jesus Christ through Paul" (N.T.).

10. The Conduct of the Philippians (Verses 27-30).

Whether Paul is absent or present with the saints, he desires that their conduct may be worthy of the gospel of Christ. He does not think of their conduct in relation to himself — that it might be worthy of Paul — but in relation to Christ. Hence he desires that they may stand fast in one spirit, with one soul, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Finally there are adversaries to meet and sufferings to be borne. If we view such in connection with ourselves we may well be terrified, for we are weak and they are strong. Paul viewing such in connection with Christ can say, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." Suffering is robbed of its terror and seen to be a Christian privilege that has been "given" to us in grace, carrying with it a bright reward in glory.

Thus, from a rapid review of this chapter, it becomes plain that everything is viewed in connection with Christ. Whether it be a gift from the saints, the saints themselves, or the love between the servant and the saints; whether it be the condition of the saints or the fruits they bring forth, the circumstances which befall them, the contentious men they may have to meet, the body in which they tabernacle, the life they live down here, or the death that ends that life; whether it be the presence or absence of a gifted leader, the adversaries that oppose the saints or the sufferings they may have to endure — all are viewed in connection with Christ. This blessed viewpoint is the result of having Christ for the life.

Moreover, the result of having Christ for the life, and viewing all in connection with Christ, is the enjoyment of true Christian experience. Thus the apostle expresses thankfulness in remembering the saints (verse 3); joy in praying for them (verse 4); confidence as to their future (verse 6); loving interest in their present welfare (verses 7-11); continuous joy that Christ is preached. He has no trace of fear in the presence of life or death or adversaries, or sufferings; he is filled with joy at the thought of departing to be with Christ; he is filled with calm and peace in the presence of adversaries, if for a while he is left here to be for Christ. Such are the happy and true Christian experiences of a man who has Christ for his life. As set forth in the apostle we cannot but admire this life, though humbled as we have to confess how far we come short in living the life.

Philippians 2.

The first chapter of the epistle presents Christ as our life, and the Christian experience that is the happy result of viewing the different circumstances of our path in connection with Christ. The second chapter presents Christ as our pattern, and the Christian experience that flows from having the lowly mind set forth in Christ. In the first chapter Christ is the Object that governs the Christian life; in the second chapter He is the Pattern that imparts grace to the Christian life. Thus the Christian life is not only a life devoted to Christ, but also a life marked by the lowliness and gentleness of Christ.

In verses 1 to 4 the apostle expresses his longing for the unity of believers, and exhorts to the lowly mind without which there can be no practical unity.

In verses 5 to 11 he presents Christ as the perfect Pattern of the lowly mind.

In verses 12 to 6 he gives a beautiful picture of the Christian life lived according to the Pattern.

Finally, in verses 17 to 30, we have three examples in actual life of believers whose lives were formed after the Pattern — Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

1. Unity (Verses 1-4).

It is good to notice that the apostle, in writing to the saints, while faithfully dealing with defects that may mark them, never overlooks the graces that adorn them. He gladly recognizes the fruit of the Spirit, though faithfully rebuking the works of the flesh. Thus in writing to the Philippians — a company of saints rich in the graces of Christ — he lingers with delight upon the fruits of the Spirit that they exhibit — the "consolation in Christ," the "comfort of love," the "fellowship of the Spirit," and the "bowels and compassions." Nevertheless, with all these excellencies, he sees a serious defect, though, remembering their graces, he touches it with a very tender hand. He discerns in this assembly a lack of unity. Again and again, in a gentle, pleading spirit, he refers to this defect. In chapter 1 he alludes to it when he desires that they should "stand firm in one spirit, with one soul labouring together." Were this all that was said as to practical unity we should hardly have known that it was lacking in the assembly at Philippi. However, in chapter 2. the apostle, with greater plainness, intimates that there were symptoms of division amongst them. Therefore again he exhorts them to "think the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing." Then a little later in the epistle he appears to have this lack of unity in his mind when he says "Let us walk in the same steps" (Phil. 3: 17). Finally he sends a special message to two sisters, beseeching them to "be of the same mind in the Lord" (4. 2).

Though touching this lack of unity very tenderly he does not treat it lightly. He realizes that if a spirit of division creeps into an assembly, if only between two sisters, it will hinder the work of the gospel, mar their testimony to Christ, and check spiritual progress. If in the apostles' day the lack of unity was so serious, is it less so today? Surely not! Though alas! in a day of ruin, we have become so accustomed to division, and so constantly faced with differences of judgment, that we are in danger of regarding the lack of unity with dull apathy — a matter of regret but of no great consequence. If, however, any little company of God's people is to set forth in any measure the graces of Christ, to make spiritual progress and render any little gospel testimony, the first necessity will be unity amongst themselves. Moreover, let us note that the unity of which the apostle speaks is not a mere outward unity of words and ways. It is a unity of heart and mind. "Think," says the apostle, "the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, thinking one thing." Therefore to produce this unity he does not set before us a formal creed to which all must subscribe, or a set of rules to which all must adhere. He takes a better way: he sets before us Christ. First, however, in verse 3, he points out the great hindrance to this unity of heart and mind. He says, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory." The hindrance in one word is self-importance. Strife is the endeavour to put down others: vainglory is the attempt to exalt self. Anything that is done simply in opposition to someone else, or with the object of exalting self will tend to destroy unity.

Then the apostle shows that the true way to promote unity is through self-effacement. He says, "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own qualities, but every man also on those of others" (Phil. 2: 3, 4). The lowly mind does not think of self at all, but only of the good of others. Naturally we find it difficult to lose sight of ourselves and think only of others in love, for the tendency with us all is to attach a certain importance to ourselves. It is easy to assume a lowly manner and to use lowly words; the real difficulty is to have the lowly mind.

We may talk in a lowly way of ourselves, but self-depreciation is no evidence of the lowly mind, rather the reverse. In self-depreciation we are, after all, talking about ourselves, and this may be the worst form of pride — the pride of humility. The lowly mind does not think of self — good or bad — it thinks of others to serve in love. It is the ignoring of self, not the depreciation of self.

Let us also carefully note that the promotion of unity, in this passage, is set before us as an individual matter. The word is "each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves; regarding not each his own [qualities] but each those of others" (N.T.). In a day of division and scattering we are

not asked to undertake the impossible task of bringing about the unity of Christendom, but we are exhorted to promote unity by each one forgetting self and in lowliness of mind seeking the good of others in love.

It is instructive to see that the strife and vainglory, as well as the lowly mind of verses 3 and 4, are illustrated in the incident recorded in Mark 9: 33-37. This passage speaks of a strife that had arisen among the disciples. As with ourselves, too often, they had fallen out "by the way." Very similar was the cause of the dispute to that which has caused so many divisions amongst the people of God in our day — someone wanted to be great; for we read, "they had disputed among themselves who should be greatest." Here, then, was strife and vainglory at work, and the Lord takes the occasion, in His own tender and gracious way, to give them, and us, a lesson in the lowly mind. A little before He had been speaking of humbling Himself to the cross; they, with apparent hardness and insensitiveness of heart, immediately strive amongst themselves as to who shall be the greatest. Nevertheless, the Lord does not rise up with indignation and rebuke His disciples; He sits down in lowly grace and calls them to Himself. The lowly mind in Christ will serve them in love, where the natural mind would have rebuked them in scorn. Having gathered them around Himself, He gives them a lesson in the lowly mind. He says if you want to be first then become the servant of all. He seems to say, "Do not think of yourself at all, but serve others in love." And having shown them the way to greatness, the Lord gives them a practical lesson by taking a "little child into His arms." The Lord of glory comes down to earth and picks up a little child, He had indeed the lowly mind.

Turning back to the Epistle to the Philippians we shall see that the way of the Lord with His disciples anticipates the teaching of the Spirit to the church. The Lord, as we have seen, instructs His disciples that the end of all strife, and the path to true greatness, is found in having the lowly mind of one who serves in love, and then presents Himself as the perfect Pattern. So in Philippians 2. the apostle, having pressed upon the saints the lowly mind as the way to end all strife, presents before them Christ as the perfect Pattern of the lowly mind.

We are thus reminded that the lowly mind cannot be acquired by effort, or by trying to be humble. Effort only brings self all the more into sight, leading to self-occupation, rather than self-effacement. The lowly mind can only be produced by the apprehension of what is set forth in Christ. Seeing the lowly mind in absolute perfection in Christ, we cannot but admire its perfect grace and beauty, and we become transformed by what we admire. Beholding the glory of the Lord we are changed from glory to glory.

2. Christ our Pattern (Verses 5-11).

In order that the mind of Christ may be formed in us, the apostle presents Christ before us as our perfect Pattern. We have a touching presentation of the lowliness of mind that was expressed in Him in His marvellous journey from Godhead glory to the cross of shame. Let us note, the force of the passage is to present, not simply the downward path He took, but the lowly mind which marked Him in taking the path.

First, Christ is presented as "being in the form of God." No man could pretend to describe the form of One "whom no man hath seen or can see"; nevertheless we are told what was the mind of Christ while yet in the form of God. His mind was so set upon serving others in love that He thought not of Himself and His reputation, but "made Himself of no reputation," and laid aside the outward form of God — though never ceasing to be God.

Second, He exhibits the lowly mind by taking the form of a servant. Not only does He serve, but He assumes the form that is proper to a servant.

Third, still further does He express the lovely mind by the particular "form of servant" He assumed. The angels are servants, but He passed the angels by. He was made a little lower than the angels and took His place in the likeness of men. He passed by the higher form of servant to take the lower. He was made in the likeness of men: a word that surely implies manhood in its full constitution — spirit, soul, and body; though, be it remembered, not manhood in its fallen condition.

Fourth, still further is the lowly mind expressed in Christ; for when found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself. He did not take occasion by "being found in fashion as a man" to exalt Himself amongst men according to the natural thought of His brethren, who said, "If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world" (John 7. 3, 4), but He humbled Himself. He did not claim His rights as man.

Fifth, yet further He expresses the lowly mind by becoming "obedient." He might have become a man and commanded, but He takes the place of obedience. This implies the laying aside of individual will, to do the will of another.

Sixth, then again the lowly mind is seen by the measure of His obedience, for He was "obedient even unto death." This was more than obedience. In obedience He gave up His will; in death He gave up His life.

Seventh, finally His lowly mind is expressed in the death that He died. There are many forms of death, but of all the deaths that man can die, He died the most ignominious of deaths — the death of the cross. This was more than an ordinary death, for while in going to death a man gives up his life, in going to the death of the cross a man gives up, not only his life, but his reputation before men. Thus it was with the Lord. In going to the death of the cross such was His lowly mind — so truly did He ignore self — that He gave up His reputation before men and was numbered with the transgressors.

Here, then, we have the lowly mind of Christ expressed in His down stooping. The object of this great passage is not to prove that Christ is God, or that He became a true and perfect man, though both truths are involved. It has been truly said, "His humiliation 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 to do so." On the other hand, if it was not true manhood that He assumed there would be no expression of true lowliness of mind. Thus, while the passage guards the glory of His Godhead and maintains the reality of His manhood, yet the immediate object is to present, as one has said, "the mind of One who from a height of glory beyond possible apprehension could come down, moved by His love, into the lowest possible depths where again the eye cannot follow Him, every step the giving up afresh of something that might be held."

Here indeed is the perfect pattern of the lowly mind — the mind that forgets self in thinking of others; that leads to sacrifice in order to serve; that gives up that others may gain. Evidently the life governed by this mind — the mind that was in Christ Jesus — would be a life of lowly grace.

Moreover, it is the life that has its bright reward. This, also, has its perfect expression in the Lord Jesus. The lowly mind took Christ into the lowest place, therefore God has exalted Him to the highest. In the highest place He bears the greatest Name" A Name which is above every name." And yet more, in the highest place, with the greatest Name, He will have universal sway. Every knee will bow before Him. Heavenly, earthly, and infernal beings — all must bow before the One who bears the Name of Jesus. All will confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Thus the lowly mind in Christ Jesus has led to the blessing of the saints and the glory of the Father. So, too, in our little measure as, with the perfect Pattern before us, the lowly mind is formed in us, it will lead to the blessing and unity of God's people; and, above all, to the glory of the Father.

3. The Christian Life (Verses 12-16).

The apostle passes on to present a beautiful picture of the Christian life formed after the pattern. He says as it were, "I have exhorted you to have the lowly mind, and I have set before you the perfect pattern of the lowly mind in Christ, now I look for an answer to the pattern I want you to obey." Obedience to the truth the apostle has been setting before us will have a two-fold result: first, it will lead to salvation from all the enemies and snares by which the believer is surrounded in his journey through the wilderness: second, it will lead to the expression of the Christian life formed after the pattern.

As regards the salvation of which the apostle speaks. When he was present with them he exposed and resisted the different attacks of the enemy. Now he was absent they would have to work out their own salvation. This would call for fear and trembling; "fear" because of the power of the enemy, "trembling" because of their own weakness. In this warfare self-confidence and fleshly energy would only lead to defeat. However, if the devil was against them, God was for them and working in them. Paul was absent from them, the devil was against them, but God was with them, to work in them both the willing and the doing of His good pleasure.

What, then, is the good pleasure of God? The following verses, 14 to 16, will tell us. It is the pleasure of God that all that is of the flesh should practically be set aside in His people in order to make room for the display of Christ. Thus at once the apostle passes from "willing" and "doing" to "being." All this, he says, is in order that we may "be" something. And what are we to be? In character just what Christ was — blameless, harmless, irreproachable, children of God, shining as lights, and holding forth the word of life. The flesh refused with its murmurings and reasonings; the character of Christ reproduced, resulting in a witness for God in the world — shining as lights in a dark world, and holding forth the word of life in a dead world. Shining is not what a man says, but what he is — he shines. "Holding forth" is not exactly preaching, for it is "holding forth the word of life." The "word of God" is what God says, not what we say. We hold forth what God says.

4. Practical Examples of the Christian Life (Verses 17-30).

In the remaining portion of the chapter we read of three devoted men in whose lives we see the setting forth of the lowly mind that, forgetting self, thinks only of serving others in love, thus expressing the Christian life lived after the pattern of Christ.

First, the apostle himself (17, 18). Naturally he does not say he is an example of the lowly mind; but obviously the Spirit of God intends that we should view him as such, for he is a striking example of a man who, having the mind of Christ, was willing to pour out his life in the service of others. In the gift of the Philippians he sees the faith that led them to make a sacrifice to God — a service of love to himself. As for himself, he has already told them that his conviction is that he will live and continue with them for their "furtherance and joy of faith" (1: 25); but if God willed otherwise, and he was called to make the greatest sacrifice of love in his service for the saints, he would rejoice to do so, and they, too, are called to rejoice, counting the giving up of his life as a "libation" poured out to the glory of God.

Second, the apostle passes on to speak of Timothy (19-24). He is another example of a man possessed with the lowly mind that, forgetful of self, serves others in love — a man having the mind of Christ, and thus like-minded with the apostle. One of whom he can say he "will care with genuine feeling how ye get on" (N.T.).

Alas, the mass of the Christian profession, even in that day, had a very different mind, for the

apostle has to say, "All seek their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ." In contrast to these Timothy had given proof of the lowly mind by his loving fellowship with the apostle in the service of the gospel.

Third, in Epaphroditus we have another striking example of the lowly mind. He was not only a companion but also a companion in labour; a fellow-soldier in the conflict, and a messenger who ministered to the apostle's wants.

Not thinking of self, or sparing self, he was ready to labour, to fight, to serve. And in the midst of this full life of service he did not forget the Philippians; for even in sickness, that brought him nigh to death, he was not thinking of himself but of the saints, .who, he feared, would be plunged into anxiety and sorrow on his behalf, having heard of his sickness.

In each of these shining examples we see the lowly mind of Christ expressing itself in a life of gracious consideration of others, that forgets self, and is ready to surrender self, and life, and all things that men count dear, in order to serve in love.

Philippians 3

In the second chapter of the epistle, we have the presentation of the lowly mind perfectly expressed in Christ, in His pathway from the glory to the cross, producing in the believer the grace of the Christian life.

In chapter three we have the presentation of Christ in the glory — the goal to which the Christian presses on — to impart to the believer the energy of the Christian life. In this Scripture the believer is viewed as leaving behind the world from which Christ is absent, and journeying on to that better world to which Christ has gone. He is seen travelling this heavenly path with his heart so engrossed by Christ in the glory, that he counts all things, in which the flesh glories, as dung and dross. His mind is so set on things above, that he forgets the things that are behind.

Such is the beautiful picture set before us, and exemplified in the apostle's life. It is for believers to walk as having his path as "an ensample" (17). Feebly we may answer to the pattern, but at least we can appreciate its beauty, and seek to know its blessedness.

1. The Secret of the Heavenly Path (Verse 1).

"Rejoice in the Lord" is the opening exhortation of the chapter. This discovers to us the secret of the path that is set before us. This is more than rejoicing in the blessings we have received, it is an exhortation to rejoice in the One through whom we have received them. Through the blessings we reach the Blessor, and discover that He is greater than all the blessings He bestows. It is the discovery of the attractiveness of the Blessor that sets the feet in the path that leads to the place where He has gone. The One in whom we rejoice is the One to whom we press on.

This exhortation, and the experience to which it leads, is very happily anticipated in the case of Peter, and the other disciples, in the incident of the great draught of fishes described in Luke 5. There the disciples' feet were set in a path in which they left all to follow Christ, for, at the close, we read, "They forsook all and followed Him." What was it, however, that set their feet in this path? It was the discovery that Christ is greater than all the gifts that He gives. The Lord had just given the disciples the biggest catch of fishes that had ever fallen o their lot. Such an unexpected display of miraculous power discovers to Peter the glory of the Person of Christ, and makes him realize, in the presence of God, his own exceeding sinfulness. It does more, however, for it brings home to Peter the blessed truth that all

this divine power is for him in grace, in spite of the fact that he is a man full of sin. Realizing his sinfulness, he says, "Depart from me" realizing the grace of Christ, he gets as near to Christ as ever he can. The result is that Christ becomes greater to Peter than the gifts that He gives, and he leaves behind the gifts — the draught of fishes — to follow the Giver. He forsook all, and followed Him."

We, too, if rejoicing in the Lord, would know a little more of following hard after the Lord. An unsatisfied heart will lead to restless feet. The joyless man is the listless man. The man of divine energy is the one who is rejoicing in the Lord. We oft-times hinder our joy in the Lord by seeking joy in ourselves, our brethren, our circumstances or our surroundings. Had Paul done so he might well have been cast down, for, as to his circumstances, he was in prison; as to the saints, all were seeking their own; and over some, who professed the Name of Christ, he has to weep. He rejoiced in One of whom it is written, "Thou art the Same," and "Thou remainest" — One who never changes and will never pass away.

To set this blessed Person before the saints was nothing new with the apostle: he had often ministered Christ. However, he says the same things ate safe things, and to minister Christ is not irksome to the servant of Christ. In another epistle the same apostle warns us against "itching ears" that seek for some new thing, and lead many to turn "from the truth ... unto fables" (2 Tim. 4. 3, 4).

2. The Hindrance to the Heavenly Path (Verse 2).

Before proceeding to set before us the Christian path, the apostle pauses to give a solemn warning against those who were seeking to bring into the Christian circle an earthly religion after the flesh. He says, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision." Here he alludes to Judaizing teachers who were troubling the assemblies in Galatia and elsewhere.

This danger did not arise from the open opposition of corrupt Judaism to Christianity, but from a corrupting movement inside the Christian circle. Corruption from within is ever more dangerous, and more evil, than opposition from without. For this reason, doubtless, the apostle denounces in scathing terms these Judaizing teachers. They were "dogs" acting in a shameless and conscienceless way they were "evil workers" actuated by malice. They are not owned as true Jews, but referred to in contempt as "the concision."

The apostle sees that the great effort of the enemy is to draw the Christians from the heavenly Christ, the heavenly calling, and the heavenly path, by involving them in an earthly religion through a corrupting movement within the Christian Assemblies.

This was not the opposition of those in Judaism advocating a return to the Jewish system — a danger to which the Hebrew believers were exposed, and to meet which, the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. This was an effort by those within the Christian circle to mix Judaism with Christianity, law with grace, and ordinances with the work of Christ. The success of such a movement would mean the entire loss of the heavenly character of Christianity. The subtlety of the snare lies in the fact that there is no suggestion to go back to Judaism, or give up 'Christianity. The suggestion is that Christianity should be made a little more attractive to the natural man by adding a little of Judaism.

How well the enemy knows that this must end in the loss of every vital truth in Christianity.

3. The Spiritual Character of Christianity (Verse 3).

Having denounced the corrupters of the truth, the apostle presents, in one short passage, an epitome of Christianity, which, if held in power, would deliver from the corruption. He says,

We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not

trust in flesh" (N.T.).

The true circumcision can only be found in the Christian circle, for circumcision is no longer "outward in the flesh," but "is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter" (Rom. 2. 28, 29). Moreover, Christian worship is in the Spirit, making everything of Christ, and refusing everything of the flesh.

Thus, in Christianity all is vital. There is a work of God in the heart and worship by the Spirit. It has a living Christ for its object, and utterly refuses the flesh. The corrupting movement, within the Christian circle, would set aside all that is vital while retaining the form of Christianity. It would substitute the profession of Christianity, by subscribing to creeds, and submitting to forms, for the true circumcision of the heart. It would establish an outward form of worship by means of buildings, music, vestments and ritual, in place of worship by the Spirit of God. Instead of having no confidence in the flesh, it would make every possible appeal to the flesh. It would end, as the apostle foretells in another epistle, in the corrupt Christendom of our day "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." The Philippians were solemnly warned to beware of this corruption in its inception. We are warned to "turn away" from the corruption in its full development. (2 Tim. G: 5).

4. 'Things left Behind in Taking the Heavenly Path (Verses 4-8).

The apostle appeals to his own history in proof of the utter futility of the flesh in divine things. Does natural birth give any standing before God? Then Paul possessed this qualification in the highest degree, for was he not of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews? Is there any fit in ordinances? If so, in Paul's case, the ordinances had been duly observed. He was circumcised the eighth day, and the requirements of the law had been met with all the strictness of the Pharisee. Is there any gain in maintaining the traditions? If so, Paul, with the utmost zeal, had opposed the introduction of new light, by persecuting the church. Will man's righteousness avail before God? If so, Paul could lay claim to a righteousness beyond others, for, as touching the righteousness of the law, he was blameless.

What was it, then, that led Paul to count as loss the natural advantages of birth, the religion of ordinances, and the righteousness of man? He has one answer. He had seen Christ in the glory. From that moment he could say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." On the way to Damascus he had the vision of Christ in the glory. He saw Christ — a living Man in the glory — and a company of people on earth united to the Man in the glory and journeying on their way to share His glory. Moreover he discovered that, with all his natural advantages, his religious observances, his religious zeal and blameless life, he had no link with Christ in the glory and no part in the heavenly company on earth. Further, not only the religion of the flesh left him apart from Christ, but could never secure for him any part in Christ, and most solemn of all, he discovered it was the very thing which made him the most deadly enemy of Christ, and His people, that the world has ever seen.

The religion of the flesh might, indeed, give him a great place before man, but he saw that to be united to Christ in the glory — to be of the company on earth who are travelling on to the great day when they will be like Christ and with Christ in life's eternal home — must be infinitely more blessed than to have a place, however great, in man's small world through man's short day. Thus it came to pass, that, from the moment the light from heaven shone into his dark soul, his choice was made, and all that was gain to him as a natural man, before men, was esteemed as loss on account of Christ in the glory.

Surrounded by the world of corrupt Christendom, we see, in our day, a vast profession, built up according to the religion of the flesh, which destroys all that is vital in Christianity. We see that those

who are most zealous for this religion of the flesh secure for themselves a great place before men, and are high in the honours of this world. It is a religion that has its gain in this world. Those, however, who have heard the heavenly call, are well content to count as loss every form of religious flesh, with the worldly advantages it may secure, for they have seen a New Man in a New World — Christ in the glory.

Such was the experience of the Apostle Paul. From the start of his Christian career the glory of this world was dimmed by the light above the brightness of the sun, revealing to him Christ in the glory. Moreover, not only did he count all things loss at the start, but also, when thirty years have passed, he still counts "all things but loss." It may be comparatively easy in the freshness of first love to count all things but loss, but in the presence of natural claims, the allurements of the world, and the ever present snare of an earthly religion offering an easier path to the flesh, it is not always easy to continue counting all things loss. Paul, however, not only counted all loss in the past, but he continued to do so. "Yea, doubtless," he says, "I count all things but loss." Further, he not only counted them loss, but he suffered the loss of all things. It was not with him simply an estimate of things formed in his mind, but he suffered the actual loss of all things. Finally, in regard to the things of which he had suffered the loss, he says he counts them but dung. We may be sure that he cast no regretful looks at the things he had left behind, for who would regret leaving a heap of filth behind. Our difficulty is to reach a true estimate of the religion according to the flesh, and to see that human righteousnesses, in the sight of God, are but filthy rags.

5. The Motives that held Paul in the Heavenly Path (Verses 8-12).

Very blessedly the apostle passes from the things he had left behind to speak of the motives that energized him in pursuing the heavenly path.

First, he says, "that I may win Christ." He looked up and he saw Christ in the glory, and he looked on to the end of the journey when he would be with Christ and like Christ in the home of glory, and he says, as it were, "My one desire, in the course which I am pursuing, is to reach the goal — to win Christ."

Second, the apostle desires that he may "be found in Him." Paul does not infer that he is not already "in Him" before God, but outwardly, before men, he is still in a body of humiliation as the result of being connected with fallen man. When at last he wins Christ, and has a body of glory, it will be manifest that he is connected with Christ — in His line — and invested with a righteousness which is "of God," secured "through" Christ, and received by "faith" in Christ.

Third, the apostle says, "that I may know Him." For thirty years the apostle had known the Lord, but still he says, "that I may know Him." He is looking on to the time when he will be "face to face." Now, says he, "I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." Then, too, he will realize the power of His resurrection. The power that was put forth in raising Christ from the dead, and setting Him at God's right hand in the heavenly places, is the exceeding greatness of the power that will set the believer with Christ in glory. To reach this end, Paul, who was in prison, might have to go through sufferings and death. Even so, for the apostle, suffering and death would be lightened by the knowledge that it would be fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, and conformity to His death. In the apostle's estimate, suffering, and a death of shame, were well worth the while if in any way he might arrive at the resurrection of the dead.

Fourth, the apostle says, "that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Paul had before him complete likeness to Christ in glory. This great blessing he did not yet possess, but he longed to "get possession of it" (N.T.). This was the perfection he had before him, and

so owns that he is not "already perfect," but he pursued his path having the prize in view.

These, then, are the motives which held Paul in the heavenly path: "That I may win Christ"; "that I may be found in Him"; "that I may know Him"; and "that I may get possession of it (the prize), seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus" (N.T.).

6. The Christian Experience in the Path (Verses 13, 14).

For our encouragement the apostle sets before us the practical experience produced in his own soul by taking the path that leads to Christ in heaven.

First, he becomes a man of purpose with one object before his soul. He says, "One thing I do." How often the energy of the Christian life is wasted on many things. As with Martha of old, the Lord has to say to us, "thou art careful and troubled about many things." The Psalmist could say, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" (Ps. 27: 4). Paul with fuller meaning could take up this language, and say, "One thing I do."

Second, the apostle can speak of "forgetting those things which are behind." In thus speaking he does not refer to the world as such, or his sins, or the old man — things which are evil and, for faith, judged in the cross. He refers rather to things which, in their time and place, were excellent, and gain to him as a natural man — the whole Jewish system with its worldly advantages and religion according to the flesh — things the glory of which had become "no glory" by reason of the glory that excelleth (2 Cor. 3: 9-11).

Third, the apostle not only forgets the things that are behind, but he is "reaching forth unto those things which are before." This expresses the longing of a heart engrossed with an object that it reaches forth to possess.

Fourth, he says, "I pursue, looking towards the goal for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" (3, 14, N.T.). His feet follow the longing of his hearty Thus through all the changing circumstances of time, in the face of all opposition of the enemy, and in spite of the failure o. God's people, he held on his way, looking to reach the goal and obtain the prize.

Such was the blessed experience of the apostle. His mind was set on things above; the affections of his heart reached out to the things before, and his feet pursued the path that leads to the heavenly goal. He looked beyond the failure of the saints and the ruin of the Church to "the calling on high." From the moment of his conversion he realized that he was "chosen out of the world," delivered "from the people and from the Gentiles" and called on high (John 15. 19; Acts 26. 17). This "calling on high" is set forth "in Christ Jesus." It is nothing less than full conformity to Christ where Christ is. It is not simply a "high calling" as stated in the Authorized Version, but "the calling on high." There is many a "high calling" on earth. It was a "high calling" to be an apostle by calling; yet how far short every calling on earth, however high, compared with being called on high called to heaven to be with Christ and like Christ.

7. The Exhortation to Others to Take the Path (Verses 15-17).

The apostle has sethjuuitgbee us his own experience — the proper Christian experience that flows from accepting the path that answers to the calling on high. Now he exhorts others to take the same path. Joining others with himself, he says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

When the perfection refers to conformity to Christ in glory (as in verse 12) the apostle admits that, while on the journey, he can never attain this perfection. If, however, it is a question of having a perfect object before the soul, he can speak of himself and others as being perfect, or full-grown

spiritually. Let all such — all who have accepted the true position of the Christian as called out of the world, and earthly religion, in view of the calling on high — be thus minded with the apostle. This is the mind that forgets the things that are behind and reaches out to the things that are before. If in the details of the path there may be differences of judgment, God will make all plain. Nevertheless, let us see that we are travelling the same road "Let us walk in the same steps" (N.T.). Our view of the end of the road may vary according to the point in the road we have reached. Some with clearer vision may get a more distinct view of the end, but let us see that we are travelling to the same end by the same road. It is a path we can take in company with others, for, says the apostle, "Be imitators all together of me, brethren, and fix your eyes on those walking thus, as you have us for a model" (N.T.). We are each exhorted to take this heavenly road, and take knowledge of those who do likewise. We are to go on with those who are going on — having the apostle as a model.

8. Warning against those who refuse the Path (Verses 18, 19).

Already in Paul's day the Assembly had departed from her first love. The apostle warns the saints against those whose walk was a total denial of the heavenly calling. Alas, even in that day, there were "many" of whom he has to say, "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." They made a profession of Christianity — otherwise they would not be spoken of as "walking." Once they had given hope of better things — otherwise the apostle would hardly have wept over them; but their walk was such as to constitute them enemies of the cross of Christ. They allowed the things the cross condemned. They did not pose as enemies of Christ, but their walk denied the cross of Christ. They committed no sins that called for discipline, but their whole mind was set on earthly things. Their end was destruction.

9. The End of the Christian Path (Verses 20, 21).

In contrast to those of whom we are warned, the apostle shows us the mind of the Christian and the end of his journey. Instead of minding earthly things, our "commonwealth" is in heaven. The riches we share in common are in heaven. Our interests, our blessings, our gains are there. From thence we look for the Lord Jesus Christ, as Saviour, to take us there. As Saviour He will deliver us from this body of humiliation, and give us a body that will be fashioned like His own glorious body. This glorious end of the journey will be brought to pass by the power whereby he is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Such is the heavenly path and such the glorious end to which it leads. May we have the affection for Christ that takes it, and the grace to tread it, while looking for the Lord Jesus to complete it, by changing us into His own likeness.

Philippians 4.

Christ our Power.

In the former chapters Christ has been presented as our life, our pattern, and our object in glory: our life to govern our path through this world, our pattern to characterize our walk, and our object in glory to give energy in pressing on. In this closing chapter, Christ is presented as our power to make us superior to all the circumstances of this present life. The Christian is viewed in the Epistle as passing through an adverse world, opposed by a vigilant and unscrupulous enemy ever ready to use every means to turn the pilgrim from the heavenly path.

In his path, as set before us in this chapter, he finds the enemy against him; dissensions within the Christian circle; special trials peculiar to the Christian as such; the ordinary cares of life common to all; the evil and unlovely things of a world without God, and the adverse or prosperous circumstances of life. It will not, indeed, be found that all these things are specifically mentioned, but they are involved by the exhortations.

Furthermore, we have very blessedly set before us the One who alone can lift us above every trial and keep our feet in the heavenly path. Christ is our unfailing resource. His hand of power can alone enable us to walk in superiority to the dangers and snares of an adverse world, even as His mighty power enabled Peter to walk upon the water. Again and again the apostle delights to keep the Lord before us. He says, "Stand fast in the Lord," "be of the same mind in the Lord," Rejoice in the Lord always." Again he says, "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly," and, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

1. The Opposition of the Enemy (Verse 1).

The chapter opens with the exhortation, "Stand fast in the Lord." This supposes all the power of the enemy arrayed against us, and that the Christian profession no longer walks at the height of the Christian calling. With the devil opposing, true saints giving up the heavenly calling, and mere professors denying the Cross of Christ, what hope is there that any will remain true to Christ, be preserved from giving up the heavenly path, and drifting into an easy-going and lifeless profession? Our one hope, our unfailing resource, is Christ. We cannot "stand fast" in our own strength. We cannot stand fast in our brethren. They, like ourselves, are weak and failing. We can "stand fast in the Lord." He will never fail us; and in Him we shall find strength to stand against the enemy and all his wiles.

2. The Dissensions of Believers (Verses 2, 3).

We have not only to meet the unceasing hostility of the enemy, but the ever present dissensions amongst the people of God. Even in the bright Philippian assembly the spirit of dissension was at work. Two sisters were not of the same mind. Nothing is more distressing, disheartening and wearying to the spirit, than the constant dissensions amongst the Lord's people. How often have such dissensions given the enemy an occasion, which he has not been slow to use, to turn aside a weak believer from the separate path of the heavenly calling, to settle down in some easy-going religious system of men's devising!

Again, however, our true resource in the presence of our dissensions is the Lord. Why should we turn aside from the heavenly path, when difficulties rise, if we have the Lord to whom we can turn? Our differences will never be settled by mere discussion, or by way of compromise, or even by seeking to arrive at a common judgment, which might indeed be "one mind" and yet only our own mind. The only way to end dissension is for those who differ to turn to the Lord, seeking His mind. This, however, supposes the judgment of the flesh, the refusal of self-will, and subjection to the authority of the Lord. Thus only shall we arrive at the same mind in the Lord.

3. The Special Trials of Believers (Verses 4, 5).

There are special trials that are peculiar to the believer as such. There are sufferings for Christ's sake, and sorrow of heart over the condition of the Christian profession. Paul, when writing this Epistle, was in prison for Christ's sake. He was sorrowing over those who were turning aside to their own things, and weeping over others whose low walk made them enemies of the cross of Christ.

In the presence of these special sorrows we are exhorted to "Rejoice in the Lord always." Thus only shall we be sustained whether the days be dark or bright. We cannot always rejoice in our

circumstances or in the saints, we can always rejoice in the Lord. Others change, others pass away; He remains, and He is the same.

Paul had known the Lord when a free man, and he had proved the Lord when a prisoner, and, from his own experience of the Lord's sufficiency, he can say, "Rejoice in the Lord always again I say rejoice."

Moreover, this delight in the Lord delivers from the power of present things. If rejoicing in the Lord, and all the resources in Him; if confident that He is at hand, and that at His coming He will right every wrong; we shall not be over-troubled with the confusions in the world or the professing Church. We shall not be asserting our rights, or vehemently expressing our opinions on this world's affairs. We can afford to be quiet if the Lord is at hand, and thus be known by all men for gentleness and moderation.

4. The Cares of this Life (Verses 6, 7).

Not only are there special trials peculiar to the Christian, but also there are the ordinary trials of life common to mankind. There are the everyday anxieties connected with our homes, our families, our health, our callings, and our circumstances. How are we made superior to these varied cares? It is evident that God would have his children to be free from all worry and anxiety. This, the word clearly tells us, can only be brought about by taking everything to God in prayer. It is not simply the great trials that we are to take to God, but the small worries. The little thing that worries might appear foolish or fanciful to others, nevertheless let us not weary ourselves with reasoning about it in our minds, but by prayer and supplication make it known to God. He knows all about the burden before we go to Him. We cannot tell Him anything that He does not know; but making it known we know that He knows. In result we are relieved from anxiety. It does not follow that we get our request, but we obtain the peace of God to garrison our hearts.

The story of Hannah in the Old Testament affords a striking example of the relief afforded by prayer. Wearied by a trial that made her fret and weep, there came a moment when she "poured out her soul before the Lord," with the result that, though her circumstances were not altered or her prayer answered, she went on her way "in peace," and was "no more sad" (1 Samuel 1: 6, 7, 15-8).

David, in the day of his great sorrow, could say, "I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me"; with the result that he could add, "I laid me down and slept." His circumstances were not altered, but his heart was relieved by casting his care upon the Lord (Psalm 3: 4-6).

Did not Mary of the eleventh of John learn the blessed effect of casting her sorrow upon the Lord when, having sent a message to the Lord concerning her trial, she was enabled to "sit still" in the house? (John 2: 3, 20).

5. The Defilements of the World (Verses 8, 9).

The fallen world through which we are passing is characterized by things that are false, and mean, and wrong; things unholy and unlovely; things that are of evil report, vicious and to be condemned.

There is indeed much that is beautiful in nature, and the natural man is capable of producing and appreciating much that is beautiful in music and art and literature, and yet sets little value on that which is morally beautiful. How can it be otherwise in a world that could see no beauty in the One who is altogether lovely?

The evil of the world is ever present, flaunting itself in public, retailed by the daily press, and

broadcasted by wireless. It is gloated over in fiction, depicted in places of entertainment, and exploited for gain.

How then is the Christian to be kept from the defiling influences of such a world? Only by having his mind occupied with things that are true, noble, just, pure and lovely; things that are of good report, virtuous and to be praised. These things find their perfect expression in Christ and in His people in the measure in which Christ is formed in them. Thus, again, Christ is our resource to lift us above the defiling influences of a world without God. The character is formed by what the mind feeds on. Hence the importance of the exhortation, "Think on these things."

The one whose mind is occupied with the things that are morally lovely, the things that Christ delights in, will be ready to do the things that are pleasing to Christ. Hence the "thinking" of verse 8 is followed by the "doing" of verse 9. Just as the evil thoughts of the heart find their expression in evil ways, so right thinking is followed by right acting. Thinking of things morally beautiful and doing that which is pleasing to God, we shall have, not only the peace of God in our hearts, but the God of peace with us in our walk.

6. The Circumstances of Life (Verses 10-13).

In his passage through this world the Christian may be tried through seasons of adversity, or tested by times of prosperity. Either condition has dangers for the believer. In adversity we may be tempted by the devil to lose confidence in God and question His ways or His love. It was thus Job was tested (Job 1: 20-22; Job 2: 9, 10). In prosperity we may grow self-confident and forget God. It was so with David (Ps. 30: 6). Moses warns God's people lest in days of temporal fulness the heart be lifted up and God be forgotten (Deut. 8: 14).

Speaking from his own experience, the apostle instructs us how to escape both snares. Tested in every way he knew how "to be abased" without being cast down and losing confidence in God; and how to "abound" without being lifted up and forgetting God. What was it sustained Paul whether in fulness or hunger, whether abounding or suffering? His answer, in one word, is "Christ." He had experienced the support of Christ in days of need as in days of plenty and he proved that in Christ he had strength for all things.

7. The Need of Others (Verses 14-19)

If, like the apostle, we have "learned" and been "instructed" by the support of Christ to be lifted above our circumstances, be they adverse or prosperous, we shall be ready to communicate to others. If overcome by need we shall think only of ourselves; if overcome by prosperity we shall forget God and the people of God. If strengthened by Christ in every circumstance our hearts will go out to others in need. And as with the Philippians, so with ourselves, it is well to communicate in the afflictions of the needy. Such gifts comfort the needy, bear fruit to the giver, and rise up as an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.

Thus in this closing chapter the apostle anticipates the opposition of the enemy, the special trials of the believer, the cares of this life, the defiling influences of the world, circumstances whether adverse or prosperous, and turns us to the Lord as the One who is able to sustain through all and lift us above all, that we may be kept for the glory of our God and our Father (verse 20).