

Christ for the Christian.

Philippians 1: 20-21; Phil. 2: 5-13; Phil. 3: 3, 13-15; Phil. 4: 12, 13, 19, 20

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I remember an address on the Philippian epistle which started like this: "Sport for the sportsman, politics for the politician, money for the miser, Christ for the Christian". This was thought-provoking, and might also have its effect on the reader.

There is a sequence in the development of the truth in the epistles, which we have heard expressed like this:

Dead with Christ — Romans

Risen with Christ — Colossians

Seated in the heavenlies in Christ — Ephesians.

These three very short remarks do not cover the whole truth of these epistles, but they give a key for going into them more fully. Where does Philippians fit into the sequence? I believe that Philippians is complementary to Ephesians, in this manner: it gives the life of a heavenly man. Do you know any heavenly men? Look around and see if you can see any heavenly men! 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of Christ as the Heavenly One: "As is the heavenly One, such also the heavenly ones"; so there must be some heavenly ones on earth, heavenly as to their destiny. God would have us to be heavenly in character; this covers our conduct too. And the way the Spirit of God takes to promote heavenly-mindedness and to produce heavenly character, is to engross us with the heavenly One.

First, I want to say, we need a bedrock to rest upon. Here it is: "He who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day" (1: 6 J.N.D. Trans.). Do you need assurance? Do you need a sense in your soul that what you got in trusting Christ will last, and that you cannot be lost? It is here. Your history has been commenced by the work of God. It will be completed by the work of God; but I can also tell you that you have got to do a bit of work as well. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (2: 12-13). God has given you a commencement of history with Him, that identifies you with that blessed heavenly One and will eventuate in placing you in His company, where He is, and like Him for evermore. He does not cease to work between the commencement and the conclusion. He is working all the time, and He is working with such Scriptures as we have here in the Philippian epistle, to bring Christ before us, that we might be so taken up with Him that we begin to take character from Him. True character is the product of heart occupation with this blessed Man.

The Christ Who engages the heart of God in constant, fresh, unchanged delight, is the Object with Whom God would have us engaged. I hope that the Spirit of God will impress upon your heart and mind the preciousness of Christ. I will therefore put the four chapters of Philippians under four headings in my own words. The heading for chapter 1 is contained in verse 21. The grand ambition of the apostle Paul was, as he said in verse 20, that Christ should be magnified — magnified! God desires that with us also Christ be made large. Here Paul says, "in my body, whether by life or death". This was the language of a man who was on the threshold of martyrdom. The possibility of execution was always there at his elbow. He says, "that Christ might be made large in my body, either by life or death"; and this is the reason: "for to me to live — Christ." Our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sixth chapter

of John's Gospel said this: "As the living Father has sent me, and I live on account of the Father, he also who eats me shall live also on account of me". To eat is to make a thing your own. If you make Christ your own, there will be reproduction in you of that kind of purpose of living that characterised our blessed Lord. He said, "The reason for my living is the Father"; if you and I are absorbed with Christ, the reason for our living will be Christ. Here is a man who was absorbed with Christ, and he says, "He is the reason for my existence". "For to me to live — Christ." And, "to die" (remembering as we say these words that martyrdom was just at his elbow all the time) "to die, gain". Do we think that way? It searches us; it is only possible when our hearts are taken up with Christ in glory; so the word that I write over chapter 1 is **the motive** for Paul's living. Is it the motive for my living? It is a question we all face.

In chapter 2 verses 5-13, the man who had the motive for living was given **a model** for living. I will revert to those verses later. Christ the motive | Christ the model! "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." In chapter 3, the heading is Christ the mark Paul says, "Forgetting those things which are behind . . . I strain, I leap forward, for I press toward the mark". The verse continues, "for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus". What is the "calling on high"? Christ is, in the language of Hebrews, the Forerunner. "Whither the forerunner is for us entered". I wonder if we are pressing on? Some of us are going on, dear brethren, but crawling there, crawling there! This is the language of someone who is keen to get there! This is the language of someone who is absolutely absorbed by what is drawing him on. I press toward the mark for the prize — the calling on high of God — Christ Jesus. Peter, in his second epistle, uses his own language, taught by the Spirit. He says, "Called by glory and virtue" (1: 3 J.N.D. Trans.). There was something beckoning Peter on. It beckons me on. It beckons every Christian on. Are we **straining** to reach the mark? We need virtue on the way, and it will be supplied - moral courage, spiritual backbone to lift you out of the rut and to make every aspiration active for Christ, a living reality in your life now. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus".

Then, in chapter 4, Paul is well aware, as we are well aware, that we are absolutely poverty-stricken naturally as to the means to pursue these things. Verse 13 is the answer: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". Christ **is my might**. Brethren, everything we need is afforded to us. Our reading concluded with verse 19, "My God" — I like that! "There no stranger-God shall greet thee". God was no stranger to Paul; he says, "my God". Taking account of the exigencies of everyday living, he has already told us he knows how to be full and how to be empty. Some of us know what it is to be full; some of us know what it is to be empty. Perhaps we do not know how. Ruminates on it, because there is a wealth of blessing in it for us. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus". It is mountains high, is it not? He says, "**my God**"! Put "my God" before "my need" and sandwich "my need" between "my God" and "His riches in glory in Christ Jesus". My need begins to shrink; it does not disappear, but I find the wherewithal to carry me through. So we have Christ as our motive, Christ as our model, Christ in glory as our mark, and the might supplied by Christ on the way to reaching it.

Let us return to the verses read in chapter 2. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation". How do you think He made Himself of no reputation? By taking the form that He never had before: in J.N.D.'s translation, "Taking a bondman's form". He gave up nothing. If there was anything external to the presence of God, He left that for a moment. As for what was properly Deity, He gave up nothing. He gave up nothing attaching to Himself in Deity, but He emptied Himself by taking a form that He never had before. He took the servant's form, and He "was made [became] in the

likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself". How did He humble Himself? By becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross". Seven steps down have been seen in these verses; I can only see three — two steps down and one up. The first step was taking the bondman's form, and the second was humbling Himself in this way, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That does not mean that He obeyed death. Death had no claim on Him. It means He obeyed all the way — all the way to the cross. It is not the story of our redemption that is being given to us here. It is that self-humbling, that demonstration livingly in our blessed Lord Whose right it was ever to command — a demonstration of self-abasement. If it were known more by us, even in feeble measure, it would give us the power morally, livingly, spritually, in every way. It would give us more fellowship practically, because dike answers to like, and there is nothing so good for drawing saints together as likeness to Christ. It is **the unlikeness and the fleshly characteristics in each one of us that put us out-at-elbows with each** other. In like-mindedness to Christ we will be drawn together.

I want to draw your attention to these phrases, "being in the form of God" (v.6), "took upon Him the form of a servant" (v.7), "in fashion as a man" (v.8), and " God has highly exalted him" (v.9). The Christ of the Epistles is the Christ of the Gospels. Even in Ephesians we learn Christ — "ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him . . . as the truth is in Jesus". **In Jesus**. Our Lord has not changed in the glory. The only change related to Him in the glory is circumstantial. His position is changed. Circumstances have changed for Him, but He is unchanged. In coming down into manhood's lowly form He gave up nothing that attached to Him as "in the form of God". "Having ascended up where he was before" (John 6: 62), He is giving up nothing in what He took when assuming manhood. He has carried manhood into glory and I want now to draw attention to the fact with regard to these verses, that the Christ of the Gospels is the Christ of the Philippian epistle.

If I travel through the pages of John's Gospel I am led by the Spirit of God to the irresistible conclusion that He was no mere man. I borrow an expression from 1 Timothy 3: this is "God manifest in flesh". John's Gospel brings before us the Godhead glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Person Whom the Spirit of God delights to parade before adoring hearts in the pages of John's Gospel is here presented by the same Spirit of God: "who, **being in** [the eternal "being in"] the form of God". The lowly Man Who sat by Sychar's well, weary with His journey was none other than this blessed Person, Who was in the form of God. John's Gospel presents us our Lord Jesus Christ in the greatness and glory of His Godhead and we have the same in this verse: "being in the form of God".

In the sequence of these verses we go next to Mark's Gospel. "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth". Mark's Gospel is the Servant Gospel. As I go through the pages of Mark's Gospel, I become entranced with the "immediate" activities of the blessed Son of God in the execution of the will of God. I see Him instant in His activities. I listen on occasion to the words that fall from His lips, and when I rise from Mark's Gospel after reaching the end of chapter 16, I am irresistibly drawn to the conclusion that if anybody was, in the language of Isaiah, "Jehovah's Servant", the Man of Mark's Gospel is He. We have in Mark's Gospel the bondman's form. The Christ of the Philippian epistle is the Christ of the Gospel of Mark.

The very next expression, "being found in fashion as a man", carries us through Luke's Gospel. Proverbs says, "The charm of a man is his kindness" (Prov. 19: 22 J.N.D. Trans.). As I go through Luke's Gospel, I see the charm of a Man. I see Him, for instance, in the house of an austere Pharisee, and a woman of the city, which was a sinner, could make her way weeping, not to the feet of the Pharisee, but to the feet of the blessed charming Man. I go to the city of Nain; I see a funeral procession on the way to the cemetery and I see this Man taking account of a widowed mother who had lost her only son; and He heals her heart at the loss of her only-begotten son. He was moved with

compassion, and He touched the coffin and He gave that young man to his mother. The glory of His Godhead is presented to us, as we have said, in John's Gospel, but He assumed flesh and blood to come near to us. In coming near to us He brought God near to us in revelation that we might get near to God in the fashion and recognition of the manner in which God has drawn near to us. So we see Him, in the grace of His manhood. Are you glad that your Saviour is a Man?

Matthew's Gospel is the Gospel of the King — the tribe of Judah stamped, so to speak, upon the presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit as He moves with great dignity through the pages of the Gospel. The "shout of a king" is there, and so there is power. The lion turns aside for none. He came for a reason and He pursued it to the end; nothing stopped Him. He moved there in all the majesty of His royal bearing. The Christ of the Philippian epistle is the Christ of Matthew's Gospel. The impress of royalty is here in verses 9, 10, and 11, "Wherefore God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name". I do not myself believe that "the name above every name is 'Jesus'". It is the superior renown that He has been invested with. It is going to be displayed shortly and it is this that will be displayed in eternal days, and all will give expression to the fact that "Jesus Christ is Lord", and it will be "to the glory of God the Father". How will He bring that about? It will be by the exertion of His majestic power; and the devils, Satan amongst them, will bow the knee to Jesus. I think that is marvellous. Satan who assailed Him at every turn of the way, tried to bring Him down in the wilderness temptation, probably made an assault on Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, is going to bow the knee to Jesus, to say with all his minions "Jesus Christ is Lord"; and every being in the heavens, and every being on earth, every being in the infernal regions is going to acknowledge this to the glory of God the Father. Power will bring that about. We have the privilege now of owning His Lordship while He is rejected here on earth. You have got an opportunity now that you will not have when you are like Him and with Him in the glory: that is, to be for Him in the world where He is refused, because He is the attractive object of your heart, and you cannot help being devoted to Him.

Christ our motive;

Christ our model;

Christ our mark;

Christ our might;

Christ for the Christian!

Praise His name!