

Features of the Philippian Epistle

Illustrated in the lives of Old Testament worthies.

Philippians 1: 20, 21; 2 Samuel 15: 19-23.

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At this juncture in the history of King David as he fled before the treachery of Absalom who had stolen the hearts of the men of Israel, the devotion of Ittai the Gittite was touching indeed. His was a heart which could not be stolen, for it had been won by David. This incident fitly illustrates the verses we have read from Philippians 1.

Ittai was so attracted to David that the king had become the very reason for his existence. Note his language, how confident his affection, "As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be."

Nature would say, "life or death," faith says, "death or life." Ittai looked for the happy reversal of the king's circumstances — it might seem like death at the moment, it would issue in life.

So Paul in Philippians 1. He had Christ as the *Motive* for his living — his "raison d'etre." ". . . Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." This was at once the language of faith and affection. Only faith could see gain in death and only affection would lead to such devotion as to make Christ the supreme Object of his life. There was worked out practically in Paul the principle enunciated by his blessed Lord, for had He not said, "As the living Father has sent Me, and I live by (on account of) the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by (on account of) Me" (John 6: 57). Just as David was the reason for Ittai's living; just as the Father was the reason for the Son's living, so Christ, feasted on with delight, is the reason for the believer's living.

Philippians 2: 1-16; 2 Kings 2: 1-15

Elisha's attraction to Elijah serves to illustrate the moral application to the saints of this presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ. As occupied with the man who went up to heaven, and vested with his mantle, Elisha came out in the spirit and power of his master. So true was this that the sons of the prophets declared, "The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha."

Note verse 1 of our Old Testament Scripture: Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. Communion with his master was the outcome of companying with him at Gilgal — the place of circumcision, figurative for us of the acceptance of the truth of death with Christ. This involves the acceptance of God's judgment upon all that we are as sinful. There are three outstanding marks of the Christian company, detailed in Philippians 3: 3: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit (by the Spirit), and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have *no confidence in the flesh*"

They went down to Bethel together. Bethel means "the House of God." In the first mention in Scripture of the House of God (Genesis 28: 16-22) we learn several things: "Surely the LORD is in this place," consequently, "How dreadful is this place." God's holiness is learned there for "this is none other but the House of God." But if we learn what *we are* in the light of what *He is*, and acknowledge this sobering truth, we also find that the House of God is, "the gate of heaven." *There* is the light of divine administration and highest privilege and blessing. In the good of this — suggested by the setting up of the pillar and the pouring of oil upon it — witness and response is produced in the power of the Spirit of God from one who hitherto had only lived for self.

How suggestive were the movements of Elisha, as in the company of Elijah he travelled from point to point. Jericho, with its memories of God's triumphant overthrow of the system which opposed His intentions of blessing for His people Israel. Jordan, too, with its story of the memorable crossing by the children of Israel when the waters fled before the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord of all the Earth.

The consideration of the spiritual import of the places visited would stretch this simple paper beyond the writer's present intentions. Let it suffice for us to emphasise that Elisha who became occupied with the man who "*went up . . . into heaven*" (2 Kings 2: 11, 12) — had known what it was to company with the man who, "*went down*" (v. 2).

In Philippians 2 we are exhorted as those who believe on the Christ who has gone up, highly exalted indeed, to "let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." This was the mind to *go down*. He came down into the bondman's form, becoming Man, humbling Himself, becoming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." This was self-effacement to the last degree.

How much dishonour has been brought against our God: how ill-famed has the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ been: how much distress and division wrought amongst saints: how much weakness and impoverishment in the testimony: yes, evil has been let in like a flood through our love of self-exaltation.

May God so affect our hearts by the constant occupation with the charm and grace of our once humbled Lord that by the power of the Spirit of Christ we might model our lives after Him — "Christ once humbled here." Then occupied with the Man who has gone up, who first went down into the deepest depths of humiliation in His obedience to God, we shall come out like Him — *Christ our Model* — to the glory of God.

Philippians 3: 1-21; Genesis 12: 1 with Hebrews 11: 8-10.

Abraham, beyond many, illustrates in his history the powerful effect of the calling of God. "When he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

The call of God cut right across everything Abraham had in this world. The power of another world exerted its attractive influence and henceforth he lived in the faith and light of it. Faith led him out of his own settled order of things in answer to the testimony of God. He set his face and directed his steps towards the land of God's promise. He looked for the city which had foundations. That city was designed by and would be built by God. *There* would be the administration of His will in righteousness in the hands of a competent Administrator. Our Lord has said "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8: 56).

Henceforth, in the delivering power and light of that world which he had in hope, he confessed that he was a stranger and a pilgrim on the earth. A stranger is not at home in the scene where he is. A pilgrim is moving on to another scene which has exerted its drawing power on him.

So faith, as demonstrated in Paul, Philippians 3: 14, presses toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. Paul had come under the attraction of a glorified Christ when on the Damascus road, consequently all was changed for him. there was what was behind — this he was gladly forgetting. Those things had made everything of himself, had made him of some account in this world. He looked at them now as under the shadow of the cross of Christ. This formed his judgment. He turned his back upon it all. "What things were gain *to me*, those I counted loss *for Christ*".

At this point in his history twenty-five years or so lay behind him since he had trusted the

Saviour. How did he *now* assess all that which, the bloom of his conversion, he had *counted* loss? "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and *do count* them but dung, that I may win Christ." Christ in the glory had captivated him. That captivating Christ had been crucified by man's world. For Paul this closed the door of that world but opened the door into another world. Christ, the Centre of the world to come, drew Paul on and he was reaching forth unto those things which were before and so he said, "I press toward the *mark*".

Abraham in his day, Paul in his, looked on and pressed on. May we, in this our day and generation, have like faith and purpose of heart. We are in the midst of a decadent profession — lukewarmness abounds. May we fix our eyes on Christ in the glory and remember that there was a day in His pathway through this world when it was fittingly said of Him, "the zeal of Thy house devours me."

Oh for a rousing of heart after Him! Governed by the moral power of heavenly citizenship let us press on, looking for our coming Saviour who will use the first touch of that power which will bring in "the world to come, whereof we speak" to transform us for, and translate us to, that heavenly sphere.

God grant that we may assess everything here in the light of that glorious day when the Man of God's counsel shall be supreme. May we live our lives unto Him until we are with Him — Christ in glory *our mark*.

Philippians 4; Joshua 1 and 5.

Brought out of the wilderness with the entering of the land of promise before them, how can Joshua and the people ever hope to cross the overflowing Jordan? How can they possibly meet and dispossess the enemies? God had spread the inheritance before them in Joshua 1: 1-4, saying that He gave it to them and that "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." Every step of the way would be contested and diligent exercise, faith and dependence would be needed all the way. Was there apprehension or trepidation? How encouraging the word of the Lord, "I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Thrice over He exhorted Joshua, "Be strong and of a good courage." How true it is that God never enjoins anything upon His own but what He supplies the power to perform.

So we find in this remarkable history in the book of Joshua that Moses' successor, Joshua, found all his help in the divine resource. He placed himself unreservedly, in subject and dependent obedience, under the direction of the man with the drawn sword. He did ask, "Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" How challenging the reply, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come." Virtually he had turned the question upon Joshua, almost saying, "Who are you for?" As Joshua took the dependent, subject place he found that the power of God was available for him and so he moved forward in obedience.

In Philippians 4, faith takes the dependent place (v. 6) and finds the garrisoning of the peace of God. In obedience to the truth which has been learned (v. 9) the presence and support of the God of Peace is proved. So in regard to every circumstance of the pathway, "Pleasing or painful dark or bright," the believer can say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Faith draws confidently on the divine supply given, "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Just think of it, "*Your need . . . His riches in glory.*" The channel through which those riches meet our need — "by Christ Jesus."

Here then is the supply of all *the might* which we shall need as, laying hold of the great teaching

of the purpose of God in Ephesians and Colossians, we set out to walk the path of a heavenly Man on earth.

May the Lord be pleased to lead us — may we be pleased to be led — more and more into the appreciation *now* that:

Philippians 1 Christ is the Motive of our Christian living.

Philippians 2 Christ is the Model for self-effacement.

Philippians 3 Christ in glory is the Mark to which we travel.

Philippians 4 Christ is our Might for every inch of the way.

May we live for Him, manifesting the features which marked Him, while we reach out to Him where He is, in the power supplied by Him, until we are with Him, for His Name's sake.