

Philippians 2:15 (JTB) 72455

Bible Treasury: Volume N13, Notes on Philippians 2:15 (2:15)

In Ephesians it is our privilege to go through the lengths, and breadths and depths and heights of those heavenly places—but there is something better even than the blessedness of the land—the love of Christ that has made it ours. It passeth knowledge. You cannot know that love in its infinite fullness and breadth, but, to know the love of Christ! I was struck when reading Rom. 5, in connection with the wilderness way where we are learning our lessons, after “rejoicing in hope” it is “not only so but we glory in tribulations also.” It is tribulation all the way to the glory: then it ceases, never to be known again. But in the wilderness “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” —not, my love increasing, but the love of God, the wonderful love of God manifested in sending His Own Son—that is, the love the Spirit of God sheds abroad in our hearts—the love of God, and the love of His Christ.

It came to mind when our dear brother uttered in prayer “building up yourselves in your most holy faith.” The love of God is brought in there too— “keep yourselves in the love of God.” What does it mean? I suggest, “Just roam in that—dwell there: it has been manifested—dwell there.” When all His work is done, God is going to be silent in His love: let us dwell there; it will never fail. It is the source of all our blessedness for all eternity.

In Ephesians then it is the love of Christ which surpasseth knowledge—which has made all the glory since for you and me—oh, what we owe it!

In Philippians we are in the wilderness, and a word from chapter 2 may be profitable to our souls. What we had in Isaiah 53 we have in the opening of Philippians 2—the Same One is before us in both chapters. He who was in the form of God, O wondrous truth! — “From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God”! Holy is His Name! —may we never forget it! —that is the One we see in Isaiah 53 “despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” In Philippians 2 it tells of that One and His mighty stoop, when He laid aside His glory—that external glory. He did not lay Himself aside—did not cease to be what He always was from all eternity. That lowly Man Who sat on Sychar's well and talked to the woman was the Eternal God, the refuge of His saints. But Philippians 2 tells us He laid aside His glory, and took upon Him the form of a servant—because that He never was before; and henceforth is, a servant forever! He became a man to serve us, and after the work of the cross He went back to heaven, and He lives to serve us. And He is coming to serve us. Perhaps before the time allotted to our meeting is over He may be here! Adorable thought—it bows our hearts in worship.

But He took that place in wondrous grace—and what was it to God? Everything that God would have, and the utter contrast to the first man, who snatched at equality with God and fell. But this Man, from the first moment He was seen on His mother's breast was a sweet savior to God. And God just reversed everything that poor creatures did to Him; after they had done their very worst God highly exalted Him. God shows us what He thought of Him by “giving Him a Name which is above every name”; and to the Man who was called Jesus every knee shall bow. Our hearts delight to think it will be so He is worthy! He is worthy! But oh, the grace that has bowed our hearts to Him now and taught our lips to confess Him! “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom. 10:9); so we are among the number God says “saved.” God says it. People think it presumptuous, but God says it; and it is impossible for God to lie.

Well, in Philippians the apostle speaks to those who are saved, who have apprehended somewhat of the glory of that One. The apostle has a good report of these Philippians. In chapter 4 he has a little word to two sisters who seem to have some little friction, but the apostle would have them right, and of one mind in the Lord. Otherwise he seems to have a very good report of the dear saints there. In chapter 1 he speaks of their fellowship in the gospel “from the first day until now” a good commendation. It is a bad sign when saints of God get weary of the preaching, of having fellowship with the gospel. That gospel whereby God saved our souls we should never be weary of!

But in chapter 2:12 he says they were still going, on, and “obedient.” That is the path we have to tread, and the pattern is in the earlier verses. There is the obedient One Who never swerved from the path of obedience. “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God,” and He learned by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. He is the pattern here for us; and the verse specially on my mind is verse 15, and just the thought of the One in the early verses being our pattern. There are three things in the verse. “Sons of God” or rather here, “children of God.” What a relationship! But He of whom the preceding verses had spoken was, THE SON of God in this scene, and He was this from all eternity. But also as born into this world He was Son of God; and in resurrection He is the Son of God. Even when Son of man, still' was He the Son of God. So, these dear saints (and you and I, confessing His Name, for “whosoever confesseth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”) had been brought into happy relationship with God Himself, as His children. It is also true we are “sons of God” (Rom. 8:14, 19; Gal. 4:6). He exhorts them to be “blameless and harmless.” It is Isaiah 53 again—the unresisting One. It is only as we look at Him that we imitate Him. We see a little grace in' a brother or sister, and admire it; but all fullness is in Him; and I can draw, and you can draw from that fullness. All the millions of saints have drawn from that fullness, and it abides! No wonder Paul says in chapter 3 “That I may know Him.” Did he not know Him? But the better I know Him, the more the language of the heart is “that I may know Him.” Those who know Him little have little to say about Him.

So there is the character— “blameless and harmless”; may we be stamped with it. “Without rebuke.” Do we know anything of the true character of the scene through which we are passing? Well, we are ever to remember we are children of God, and sons of God. Children by birth; sons by adoption; a place of affection and a place of dignity. May we ever remember it! So it comes in we have such a Pattern, our Counselor and our Guide. His Name is Wonderful, Counselor. Are we walking in His steps? He has left us an example that we should do so.

Other two things are (1) “lights in the world.” The moral darkness of this scene is great. The Light of Life has been in it, and the darkness was so dense it comprehended Him not. We once belonged to it, but “We are not of the night nor of darkness.” “Walk as children of light.” I see Him the Light of the world, and I am to walk, I am to shine now, as a light in the world. He has been here, and rejected, and put out. “Father, glorify Thou me with Thine own self, with the glory that I had with Thee before the world was,” —and I see that once lowly Man the glorified Man at God's right hand; and I belong to Him up there Who was despised down here; and I am to shine in this dark scene as a heavenly light—like Him. I have got the pattern in Himself.

Then further (2) “holding forth the word of life.” He was the Word, and we are to hold forth the word of life. Blessed privilege! wonderful position—the very position the Son of God has been in! Oh, may we have that mind in us—that mind which was in Christ Jesus! That is the mind—that lowly mind! I get Him in this wonderful chapter as the One Who came from the highest heights, and went as low as He possibly could go; and God took Him up to His own heights. And the apostle tells me to keep an eye on Him and walk as He walked, and see how He went down. John says, “You keep your eye on Him and walk as He walked,” but Paul sees Him gone back and says, “I want to reach Him.” He did now know Christ in the days of His flesh. He was converted by the glorified Christ, and He says, I want to get to Him. That Man has laid hold of me, Saul of Tarsus who, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, would have got rid of every confessor of Christ. But that Christ had His eye on Saul of Tarsus, and that light shone from a glorified Christ. It put Saul of Tarsus down, and then he was lifted up; and ever after he says, 'I want to get to Him'—that glorified Christ Who had been on the tree for him, and suffered, the Just for the unjust- that One has got hold of me' he says, 'to be with Him in heavenly glory.' That is our place, through grace; and He has got hold of us to be with Him up there. Can we be worldly when we believe such a thing? Surely not. A saint who believes that Christ has got hold of him for heaven, cannot be worldly.

The Lord give us grace to feed on a humbled Christ and a glorified Christ. A humbled Christ is for us to imitate, and a glorified Christ for us to go after; and we are sure to get to Him. The perfection of our state here is conflict; we are in an enemy's land, and if in a right state as Christians we must be in conflict—Galatians and Ephesians teach us that. Flesh and spirit are always at war, and if I am seeking to get hold of a glorified Christ the enemy will see I don't enter in easily. So the perfection of our state here is conflict, but the perfection of our state in glory will be sinlessness. No sin is there. Here in myself, in the world, it is; but when with Him I shall never have to do with it more. But we have a will still. Which way is it bending—to the old master or the new? There is the Pattern; may we be walking with our eye on Him up there, listening for His Voice, “Rise up, my love, my fair one and come away.”

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