

Philippians - Commentaries by Walter Potter

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 22 (3:13-18)

Notes on Readings on Philippians 3:13-18

The New Translation renders the word "apprehended" as "take possession of." It says "Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing—forgetting the things behind." (JND Trans.) The apostle has something before him which he is pressing towards. The word "possession" is simply getting hold of or possessing the apostle for a certain thing, but he had not yet the possession of that thing. The purpose of possessing was that the apostle was to conform him to Himself, to His own glory, either by resurrection from among the dead or by His transforming power when He comes again. Consequently, what the Lord laid hold of him for, possessed him for, he does not yet possess and never will possess until he is glorified in his body.

The state of being absent from the body and present with the Lord is a state that comes in and forms no part of what God had purposed; it is an imperfect state. When the body of humiliation is changed, then he will have possession.

"The prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" (JND Trans.) is conformity to Christ. That was the prize for him because all through here the Christian is seen as running a race and making for the end. We get the same thing from God's side in the 8th of Romans as we have from Christ's side here. In the 8th of Romans it is God's predestinating us to be conformed to the image of His Son; here it is Christ laying hold of one, possessing one, to be like Himself in glory, the same thing in result. Speaking of running in a race makes one think of a remark of Capt. Triggs: "Some people ask, What is the harm of wearing a collar? If a collar hinders me, away it goes!" Hebrews 12: "Let us lay aside every weight." In that chapter the Lord is seen as running the course before Him. In the 15th verse of Phil. 3: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded"; what does that mean? Is not "perfect" in the 15th verse "full-grown"? We take "perfect" in the 15th verse to mean, as many as have this object before them. "This one thing I do"—as many as are in that state of mind. He had just one thing before him, that is, as near perfect as any can be now, to have this object before him and pressing towards it. That is his state of mind and heart: energy and freshness.

What is it in this passage, "wisdom among them that are perfect"? There it is full-grown in contrast to babyhood.

What is the meaning of "forgetting those things that are behind"? Do not let them hinder. One running in a race cannot be looking back. The figure of a racer is used. "Those things that are behind" with the apostle were really those he could glory in as a man in the flesh. No matter what it was, it was behind.

It is remarkable how little the objective character of the gospel is thought of by saints. Take a passage from 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14, "To the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is objective. Here it is the "prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus"—objective. So in the 8th of Romans and a great many other scriptures, "I press"; there is energy.

1 Corinthians 9: another line of truth—there we have energy; 26th and 27th verses: "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." It is a different line of truth, but a very important line of truth, and it shows the real in contrast to mere profession. "Not as one that beateth the air"—nothing to it. It was a real thing to the apostle. "I keep under my body." We do not always keep under our bodies; it is often trying, but it contemplates things that are really sinful.

The difference in "the prize of the high calling of God" and "the calling on high of God" is important. Any calling of God would be a "high calling" when God called him, the fact that God had called. "The calling on high" is another thing. Abraham's calling was a "high calling" when God called him; but the "calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" is to conformity to and companionship with Christ. Here it is individual—not collective or corporate.

How do we understand the 15th verse? "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you"? There are differences of judgment. Our differences of judgment tell a tale: that we all have not had Christ before us; that is, if we really and truly are of one mind, having Christ as our Object, God will reveal any differences. John 7:17: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." In the light of this passage what a tale the condition of the church tells: that Christ has not been the Supreme Object.

I think we shall find it increasingly important to have what we have just spoken of, the objective side of truth before us, not the subjective. It is so natural to be occupied with what is subjective. A certain kind of pious feeling leads to it; but it is nothing but the power of the Spirit of God and acknowledging the truth that leads to occupation with objective truth.

Does "subjective" mean what concerns ourselves? Yes, what is going on inside, not leaving behind. All that comes from not ceasing to expect anything from one's self. As long as we expect anything from ourselves, we will always be left. How can a bad tree bring forth good fruit? We have an example of it in the first Christian martyr, stoned to death—gnashed upon with their teeth. "He . . . looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus"; "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"; "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." There is moral conformity. The Lord said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"; He prayed for His murderers first: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Stephen's was moral conformity. Had he been occupied with the wicked side of it, it would have led him to say, "How long, O Lord, before Thou wilt avenge?"

How are Christians to take the exhortations that are subjective? It is to occupy us with objective truth. Take for instance, Colossians: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved"; start from this point: "holy and beloved." The thing is to "put on" according to that objective truth. "Put on therefore"—it is a wonderful passage.

There is another thing: occupation with Christ in glory conforms to Christ in humiliation. 2 Corinthians: "We all, with open[unveiled] face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory"—objective again, but the subjective is the result of the objective: "Beholding the glory of the Lord" as in a mirror.

The 16th verse is important. "Nevertheless"—whatever the state, let us walk according to what we have, and when that is the state, we will get more. Consequently, there is growth in walking according to the truth we already have to begin with. A soul says, I am saved, born again, walk according to that truth. That is individual truth, but you will be led on to corporate truth: that God has a family, and we are His household and members of Christ's body; that is another thing—a corporate thing. All is not learned at once.

Presently we will all be around the table to remember the Lord to partake of the emblems of the Lord's death—have the same precious Saviour before us. Some of us have been there for many years and some for only a short time, but it is the same thing to all. Degrees of apprehension is another thing, but it is the same thing: all have been made to drink into one Spirit. God does not expect as much from one who has been there one year as from one who has been there many years. He is remembering the Lord, and perhaps it is more to his heart than to the one who has been there much longer. God would occupy us with the same Person, leading both on and keeping the same Object before each one.

There is another thing: we find the apostle is no stranger to tears. He shed tears over the saints of God. Acts 20, 2 Corinthians 2, and our passage here illustrate what is meant in 2 Corinthians when he says, "out of anguish of heart and many tears"; so he wrote to them. He had gone in and out among those at Ephesus for a number of years. "By the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears." (Acts 20:31.) "Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping" (Phil. 3:18). These were not of the outside world but saints of God, earthly minded, selfish Christians that called forth these tears. "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies (not of Christ] of the cross of Christ."

We have called attention a number of times to the fact that in Scripture the death, blood and cross of Christ are all found in connection with certain lines of truth, and that the cross in this way is in connection with the world: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). Also the 12th verse: "As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ." It is the end of man in the flesh as connected with the world. We have here in our passage—"enemies of the cross." Enemies of the death or enemies of the blood would not do, but of the cross. How solemn and beautiful—"enemies of the cross." The truth as to the cross of Christ is little known. We do not say the truth as to the death and the blood, but as to the cross and its use in Scripture. The cross has separated us from this world and the world from us, and in the cross the world is a judged thing.

We begin by being sheltered from judgment under the blood; God does not leave us there; He takes us through the Red Sea; that is deliverance from Pharaoh and Egypt, then the wilderness and that is where the cross comes in. That truth as to the cross is very important. When the Red Sea closed upon their enemies, it shut them out of Egypt. If it shut them out of Egypt it left them in the wilderness. That is where the truth of the cross comes in.

We find ourselves content, as it were, to be sheltered from judgment under the blood of Christ. The cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet were cast into the fire that consumed the victim (Numbers 19). Cedar wood speaks of earthly glory—the glory of Lebanon—man at his best estate. The hyssop is man at his lowest. There is a mighty contrast in that little hyssop and the mighty cedar, the whole range cast into the fire. That is the cross.

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 21 (2:25-30)

Notes on Readings on Philippians 2:25-30

The 26th verse, "For he [Epaphroditus] longed after you all," gives us in a way the atmosphere in which we find ourselves in the epistle to the Philippians. They had heard Epaphroditus had been sick, and that caused the anxious desire and longing from the human side more than if they had never heard he had been sick. It is the affections drawn out—the affections in operation—the affections of the divine nature. Some folks like to have you think they are sick when they are not! Divine affections are careful not to burden other people unnecessarily.

You see how God used these circumstances: "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him." Why did not the apostle rejoice? No, but there was another side of things. Did God have mercy on him in keeping him out of heaven? For that is what it would have been had he died. But there is another side "God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." One might have said, What is the matter with you, Paul? In the previous part of the epistle you said, "To depart, and be with Christ, which is far better," and now you are talking about sorrow upon sorrow. It is important to keep ballast in that way.

There is a tremendous lack of entering into the actual circumstances of the saints. They think it is spiritual to say, "All things work together for good." It is very easy to say that when it is someone else.

God intends that these circumstances should produce certain results, certain exercises. God allowed this devoted servant, devoted man, Epaphroditus, brother and companion in labor and fellow-soldier, to be so exhausted with that journey that he was nigh unto death. Why did God allow it? It was a journey undertaken in love to the Lord's servant, his fellow-servant. God allowed it at almost the cost of his life. We express that human side a little; some are so spiritual that there is no human side to it. It is that side that pains one. This may have been

allowed to happen so that the Philippians might exercise affection—might develop that grace. It had divinely intended results both with the apostle, Epaphroditus, and the Philippians.

Some say that no tears should be shed at a funeral. The Lord Jesus shed tears. It is out of balance. When we go into the presence of death, there are both sides to it. The 3rd of Ezra should be found in all such occasions. Notice verses 11 and 12. How often that little word "but" makes a big change. Now we get what is meant, the 13th verse: "So that the people could not discern the noise." What noise? Weeping and singing commingling: "The noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people." There are both sides of it. There is an amazing lack of mingling divine and human sympathy with the people of God; they go together. When we were born again we did not cease to be human and suppose that there was no old nature within. We should be human; human nature has its proper affections and its proper relationships.

Sometimes people say they are dead to nature. Have you a wife and children? Then you are not dead to nature. It is all wrong, a muddling up of things. Scripture does not speak about being dead to nature. That is what we mean by keeping ballast. It is an immense thing to keep the even balance of things. Some of us come short a good ways. It sort of stirs one when you know this attitude is the height of spirituality in their judgment. It is no such thing. "The Lord had mercy on him and not on him only but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

Just a word about that scripture, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." It is while we look not at the things which are seen which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen which are eternal. There are the things the mind is occupied with and set one (2 Cor. 4:16). It is the outward man, frail man, the body giving way. There is nothing sinful about it, just the poor body wearing out, the outward man perishing. The inward man is the new nature. Faith feels and spirituality feels the old tabernacle breaking up. "We know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God" and rejoice that it has one beyond that death will never overtake, that will never break up.

The 25th verse gives us the relationships. First "brother," then "companion"; that is the next best thing. Companionship is what the human heart values and cannot get along without. "It is not good for man that he should be alone," and the heart that does not value human companionship in its proper place has something wrong with it. "My companion in labor," servant, fellow-soldier in conflict . . . "and he that ministered to my wants." We get the Lord giving His aged, imprisoned servant cups of cold water now to cheer him. Look at 2 Timothy 1:15 as a contrast. There is not much cold water in that, is there? There is sorrow, not refreshment. Then look at the contrast in the 16th verse: "The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain. But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me." That is very beautiful. I take it from that that he had some difficulty in finding him. Then in the 18th verse we get the apostle's appreciation of that. AU this is about the same time. "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well." Hebrews 6:10 gives a nice word in regard to love shown toward His Name. There he uses a remarkable expression: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love" and desires the keeping of it up. There he uses a bold expression: it would be unrighteous for God to forget.

Now that we are in that passage in Timothy, how do we understand the expression in verse 18 "that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day"? Here in our chapter we find "God had mercy on him." Onesiphorus may have gone up there on a business trip and remembered that this servant was there. It took a good deal of diligence to find him, but he did not give up until he did find him. It is kind of a hidden service, but how much it meant to the apostle when all in Asia were turned away from him. "And in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus thou knowest very well." Ephesus was in Asia. How do we understand "that he will find mercy of the Lord in that day"? We suppose everything will come out, the good and the bad. It is not a question of guilt or anything of that kind, but of the conduct of those who have been brought into relationship.

We might well be ashamed of the bad that will be manifested if it were not that it told out the grace of the Lord, how His grace has been above all our failure. Years ago a sister asked, "Will all the bad come out?" It is in the presence of our badness we know His goodness. In a certain way we shall find our joy in the badness. We could not bear it all in the present state, but when the flesh is gone, it will be different. Another said, "Will our brethren know?" We do not know whether they will or not, but we know they will not care, for there will be no flesh in them and none in you. We really could not say whether others are going to see it all or not. Each will give an account of himself. It is an individual thing; each one has his own record. There is nothing hidden that shall not be manifested.

Luke 12 was just called to our attention. "He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, [the Sadducees had bad doctrine] which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed from the housetops." We get three leavens in Scripture: The leaven of Herod (worldliness), the leaven of the Pharisees (hypocrisy) and the leaven of the Sadducees (bad doctrine).

How thankful in the present day we ought to be for the Word of God which reveals the thoughts and intents of the heart and the consciousness that there is nothing that is not manifest before Him. He knows it all. "Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God." 1 Cor. 4:5; this passage is in connection with stewardship.

It is good to see the value the Lord places on a cup of cold water. In a special way the day of Christ will manifest that. It is important how we find the Lord taking pleasure in the little things and not in big ones. He does not say much about the gifts of millionaires and libraries. Such have their reward in this world, and it is this world and its benefits such givers have before them, nothing about Christ. They do not recognize that God is not occupied with improving the world.

It is good to see Joseph of Arimathea. "Not many noble"—it does not say, not any. His very position kept him from confessing Christ. He was a disciple, but for fear of the Jews he did not confess Him. At the end two godly men, great ones, (we suppose both were members of the Sanhedrin) had charge of the Lord's burial. Just that brought them forward. We get nothing of Joseph until the Lord delivered up His Spirit. Of course, we knew of Nicodemus before. Do you not think the truth as to the death of Christ will test whether a man is a disciple or not? That is one of the tests, also the truth as to the atoning character of the death of Christ. It is not the martyr side, suffering for righteousness, but for

atonement from the hand of God. All own He died a martyr's death, but when it comes to dying an atoning death, very likely those very ones will oppose and ridicule.

In pictures they usually show two or three women standing around the cross and at the burial. Joseph had to go and beg for the body. He had to get a written permit from Pilate, as it were. Pilate marvelled if He were already dead, and would not give the body until he knew from the centurion He was dead. There is dignity in those two men, masters in Israel, in charge of the body of Christ. Last week someone called attention to the fact that they came forward after the others had deserted Him. It was of God. Those other poor disciples had no new tomb! That makes it all the more striking. Here is one and he has a tomb already prepared.

There are times when the confession of Christ and the atoning work of Christ test the heart and tell who is who. You get poor simple souls owning Christ as their Saviour who do not know anything intelligently about His death, but when you bring it before them, they own it thankfully. Denial and ignorance are two different things. Many souls have been brought into peace by just resting on what God says, without knowing the value of atonement or anything of that kind, and that is very important in connection with the gospel. Just present that before souls as the truth of God, to be rested upon because His Word is truth. It is a very happy experience to know the ground upon which God can save the poor sinner. The intellect may know all about the ground and never have rested on it. There is a good ring in the hymn:

That is a good foundation.

"Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me." They could not go to the post office and put the communication into the mail and send it to Rome; they had to have a messenger to carry it. It is a pretty easy thing now to send communications clear across the ocean and a comparatively easy thing to go yourself with the means of transportation we have. I take it from Philippians 4:18 it might have been quite a little package he had to take. In what way did Epaphroditus supply the Philippians' lack of service? When you communicate with such and such a person, who is going to take it? Communicating is one thing; getting it to the person is another. Sometimes it is a long way even in cities.

It sounds like a little reproach to the Philippians. In the former part of the chapter he says, "But I rejoiced

in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity." He felt not having heard from them. It was not the gift, but he wanted the affection that the gift expressed. He takes the edge off by saying, "Ye lacked opportunity." "Ye were careful" but needed someone to take it.

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 20 (2:17-25)

Notes on Readings on Philippians 2:17-25

In Paul, Timotheus and Epaphroditus we have contrast; these three servants of God are contrasted with the mass of those professing the Lord's Name in that day when "all were seeking their own." The first contrast with the apostle is when all were seeking their own things or interests. It was his joy to be offered in sacrifice and service to God's people. It is going to the full limit—sacrifice. In service to the saints you cannot go beyond what we have here, and it is, as we get elsewhere, laying down our lives for the brethren. That is the limit; beyond that we cannot go. "He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" 1 John 3:16. Paul not only did that, but rejoiced in it. He was so devoted to Christ and to the blessing of His people that he says in the 18th verse, "For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me."

Then we have the contrast of the devoted servant Timotheus: "I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state." He had the real state of God's people at heart and such an one Paul sends that he might know the state of the Philippians. All this is right at the end of the apostle's life.

In what way would that go along with 2 Timothy 1:6? "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee." We have often said, from the human side, 2 Timothy was written to a discouraged, downcast, disheartened but devoted servant of God. The apostle writes to stir him up and encourage him, and also to exhort and to warn. Take, for instance, the verse in the 1st chapter, "Stir up the gift"; in the 2nd chapter, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," and the 1st verse of the 4th chapter: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom." He warns in view of the Lord's coming to judge the living and the dead.

It shows that a devoted soul can get under the power of evil. His very devotedness made him feel the power of evil if there is not being with the Lord about it. God is not overcome, but He feels it all. That is what the cross declares. At the cross there was the question of whether sin or grace would survive. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." That is, when sin and Satan rose, grace kept on rising; it superabounded. Romans 5:20.

"I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state ... but ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel." Perhaps the apostle had known Timothy twenty years at this time.

Consider Elijah. Some of us think Elijah was a servant who was overcome with evil because of what we have recorded of him in Romans 11: "How he maketh intercession to God against Israel"—against instead of for. He was a devoted man and an honored servant.

"Overcome evil with good" means to rise above it and overcome it.

This takes us back in thought to Haggai 1: "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your celled houses, and this house lie waste?" There was the principle. "All seek their own." God's interests were forgotten. O, they say, the time has not come to take care of that, but God took notice of the kinds of houses they lived in, celled houses, and called their attention to it.

"Likeminded" is a state. There is also a word at the end of 2 Corinthians 11:20-28: all those sufferings he had and then the 28th verse: "besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." What does he follow that with? "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" He entered into the circumstances of the saints. That was really more than all those outward sufferings he had been speaking of. All that kind of outward suffering, in a certain way, the flesh can glory in, but when it comes to entering into the state of and care of the church of God, that is another thing. That was daily with the apostle, a continual thing.

Moses shunned that, did he not, when he asked to be relieved of it in Numbers 11? Prior to that he had stood for Israel. That is a remarkable thing; he got his eye off God and on the people. "Kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand,...and let me not see my wretchedness." That is a remarkable instance in that way. Numbers 11:11-15: God is not mentioned once! It is "I," "me" and the evil of the people and God's thoughtlessness! He had not taken His servant into consideration and had laid all this burden upon him! He was occupied with himself, but not in the same way as Elijah who said, "And I am left alone and they seek my life." In other words, he was the only man who feared God! God said, that is not so at all; there are seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Obadiah hid one hundred of the Lord's prophets and sustained them.

God does not record this incident of Moses in Hebrews 11. That was not faith, and He was talking about faith there. Notice what is given about Abraham: "Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed." It is just as though he obeyed immediately, on the spot. Actually that was not the case. Abraham did not make the first move; it was his father who did, and "when his father was dead, he removed into this land." Think of that crooked life of Jacob's but we get nothing of that in Hebrews 11.

It is very touching to see how Moses did enter into the afflictions of the people on another occasion. "If Thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book" Exodus 32:32. That was well-pleasing to God. That is referred to in the 3rd of Hebrews: "As also Moses was faithful in all his house."

"All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." That is a very solemn word: "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me." They had not ceased to be Christians, but Paul was going on in the proper Christian path, like a runner in a race. They had turned away from him in that sense. It does not say they had turned away from the truth, but "from me."

The epistle does not show that he is discouraged. He had his eye on Christ, pressing toward the mark. He felt things deeply but did not get under the power of them. Consider Acts 20:28-38, and 2 Corinthians 2:4 where Paul writes of shedding "many tears" and suffering "anguish of heart." In Philippians 4:11 he writes, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," and in 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Trouble in the meeting is a serious trial. If it is in the family or if it is business trouble, you can keep it to yourself; but when it is in the meeting you cannot do it.

Paul's heart was deeply wrapped up in those saints, and they had neglected ministering to him; he felt that. "Not that I desire a gift," but as perhaps telling out their forgetfulness of him; he felt it.

But now when Epaphroditus came and brought this, he rejoiced that their care of him had flourished again. "Wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity" Phil. 4:14. He softens it, takes the edge off by saying, "ye lacked opportunity." That is, there was no one to take it. It was a long way from Philippi to Rome and at last Epaphroditus said he would take it. It is one thing to take a ten dollar bill or note and send or give it, but to go and take it is quite another thing. It almost cost Epaphroditus his life. It was a part of the work. "For the work of Christ he was nigh unto death." Taking that journey nearly cost him his life, "but God had mercy on him and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

What a combination of Christian experience: not only these Philippians but look at 1 Thess. 3:1. So great was his anxiety about those who were passing through trial. Were they standing, or were they giving way? So he sends to find out, verses 6-8.

When the Lord gave converts to the apostle, he did not rest content. It was not enough to know that they had eternal life and would never perish. He wanted them to go on. He knew that in a certain sense he was responsible to lead them on. He would "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" Col. 1:28—not merely saved but in his proper place with respect to the mystery of the church.

In our day there is so much about merely getting people saved. What is uppermost now before the mind is not God's glory in man's salvation. It is the joy of the sheep being found instead of the joy of the Great Shepherd in finding the sheep, joy of the soul being saved rather than God's joy in saving it.

Why do we not have the saints more on our hearts in the way that the apostle did? The 21st verse would be the answer. Communion with God leads one to care for the objects of His care down here. "Lovest thou Me?" "Feed My sheep." That is the highest order of service the Lord has given to anyone down here on earth. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Mr. Kelly made a remark: God never for a moment allows independency in the saints one of another. "We are members one of another."

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 19 (2:8-17)

"The death of the cross" is the lowest point of human shame. There could not be a death lower than that. Here the point before the Spirit of God is not God's side (atonement, propitiation), but it is the depths to which the Lord submitted Himself in obedience to God, the lowest point of human shame.

Next we see Him in the highest place of exaltation in heaven: "And hath given Him a name which is above every name"—not only in earth but in heaven—and not only a name but the authority of that One: "That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father's glory" (J.N.D. Trans.).

It is helpful to see in that way the two extremes: extreme humiliation and extreme exaltation. We have not sufficiently noticed the shame side of the cross, the human side of it. That is the point in 1 Cor. 2:2: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." A crucified Man is the One Paul preached to those proud Corinthians who rejoiced so in human wisdom and glory. So also in Hebrews 12:2: "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame," "even the death of the cross," not only death, but the death of the cross.

"That at the name of Jesus. "That is the Lord's personal name. "Thou shalt call His name Jesus." "Christ" is a title.

What is the thought in the 53rd of Isaiah: "He made His grave with the wicked"? We read from another translation: "They made His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death." They crucified three, and they dug three graves, but God came in and never allowed Him to be put in that grave. God would not allow any further humiliation; though they prepared the grave, they never put Him into it.

"By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many"; instead of "for," put "and He shall bear their iniquities." There you get the two sides of the Lord's work: "My righteous Servant justify many"—His teaching in His life; "bear their iniquities"—He did that in His death. That makes it much clearer.

His death brought the two cowardly disciples out boldly: Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. Nicodemus, too, came to Jesus by night. Joseph goes in boldly and craves His body. He had been ashamed to confess Him. Honor was put upon Christ in His burial. He was not buried with those two thieves; the grave prepared by the wicked was never occupied by Him.

Many years ago, Mr. G. heard someone who was walking down the street use the Lord's name in vain two or three times. He went to him and, putting his hand on his shoulder, said to him, "Do you know that God hath made 'Jesus Christ' both Lord and Christ?" One day all will own His authority. We sometimes sing,

"But O! the grace that taught us now Before the Lord the knee to bow."

Some go so far as to say this is the confession that leads to salvation. The confession of Christ as Lord in Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," supposes a genuine confession. There is no confession of Christ apart from the work of the Spirit. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." "No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed." 1 Cor. 12:3.

It is remarkable you do not hear people using the expression, "Lord Jesus Christ"; they talk about "God" and about "Jesus." Here it is the fact that all do so (own Him as Lord) either by grace or judgment. We have a remarkable passage in Romans 14:9: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living." Reconciliation is by God's grace; subjugation is by His power.

Verse 13: "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." He works in the sinner to make him know his need of Christ, and when he is saved, God continues to work in him to make him to will and to do. That work goes on all through the Christian's life, and He works in us that way very largely by the circumstances in which He allows us to be. "Work out your own salvation" is in connection with circumstances—the recognition of God's hand in the circumstances—both to will and to do of His good pleasure. That is why He brings us into these straits in which we find ourselves so often. God never had to work that way in Christ; He had no contrary will. His delight was to do the will of God His Father. We have the same nature, but we have another nature, too.

Some say the old nature has been entirely eliminated. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." We deceive ourselves very easily. It is difficult to deceive other people. Once a woman who professed "holiness" was asked if she ever had an evil thought. She said, "Yes." She was asked, "Where does that thought come from?" She answered, "From the devil." "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." When the devil is chained for a thousand years, people will still sin.

"Work out your own salvation" may be individual, or it may be in assembly difficulties. The force of "your own" is in contrast with his helping them when Paul was with them, but now he is a prisoner and cannot. That is the simple meaning of "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." It is in contrast with His helping them.

"Do all things without murmurings and disputings." Here it seems it is more the assembly he has before him—the collective thing. We have often thought there is moral order here. "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." What then? "Holding forth the word of life." The state that is referred to in the 15th verse precedes the 16th verse. It is a little remarkable there that "lights" is the same as "the glory of God did lighten it" in Revelation 21. Suppose they were all at loggerheads among themselves? In a certain way there would be no testimony.

Then the next thing is, "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." That answers to the judgment seat of Christ. They are converted, but how do they go on after they are converted? There should always be some testimony of the gospel going out from an assembly. One cannot be going on with God and be indifferent to the gospel. A brother who never came to the evening meeting said, "That is only the gospel meeting!" That very thing told a tale. If there were a discipline meeting in the assembly, he

would be there and very likely would have the most to say.

Some say we do not hold forth the word of life as we should and that we are just sitting down and waiting for the Lord to come. J.N.D. was very depressed on one occasion because D.L.M. had called us "do-nothings." The Lord will try, not how much, but of what sort the work is—quality not quantity. The last shall be first and the first last. It is a good deal like giving: The Lord stood over against the treasury and beheld how they gave.

How are the unsaved to know of the meeting? They will know of it if we are faithful in giving tracts and inviting them.

The 17th verse answers to the drink offering— "poured forth." The drink offering of wine told of the joy the Lord had in doing God's will.

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 18 (2:1-11)

Notes on Readings on Philippians 2:1-11

The exhortations at the beginning of Philippians 2 are founded generally on what is in the first chapter. "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies"—these things characterize normal Christian fellowship—Christian love.

There is nothing like strife or vainglory to separate saints. The first three verses need no explanation, but it is well to meditate upon them. They are their own explanation.

In 1 Corinthians 10:33 Paul writes: "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit [which is natural] but the profit of many." To seek the good of another is unnatural. It is very simple when we come to know the origin of man's solemn condition—seeking self-exaltation. The fruit of the tree "was good for food...and...desired to make one wise." "Ye shall be as gods." They were not contented in and thankful for the circumstances in which God had placed them and that is what makes us selfish creatures by nature. That is its origin—self-seeking.

It is just the opposite of the Lord; all His path here is in contrast to man. That first man of the earth, earthy, is a creature. Who is that second Man? He is the Lord from heaven. He is not God's creature at all. That is the One who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. It was not an object to be attained or aspired to; it was His, and He humbled Himself; God did not humble Him.

The passage just referred to is in the 15th of 1 Corinthians, "The first man Adam was made a living soul." The last Adam was not made, but is "a quickening spirit," a life-giving spirit, not simply One that received life, but a life-giving spirit. All is contrast, and we find Him in that way in John 5: "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will." "Quickeneth" means giveth life.

Paul seems to write as though they were saved— quickened. However, they were still selfish: "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." That is the old nature, and it is what we have to guard against. That is why he says, "Let this mind be in you"—to seek the other one's blessing.

"All seek their own." We are all guilty of it in some measure, some degree, every day and every week, and we know it. Every breath of the old man is a breath of selfishness. "The commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." What was that? "Thou shalt not steal"? "Thou shalt not lie"? "Thou shalt not commit adultery"? "Keep the sabbath"? NO; what then? "Thou shalt not covet." That is what is inward.

"Let this mind be in you" is important. It is not people's actions, but what is the source of the actions. Two passages come to mind: 1 Samuel 2:3, "Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by His actions are weighed." 16th chapter: verses 6 and 7: "And it came to pass when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." "Man looketh on the outward appearance." That is the passage more particularly before us. It is beautiful

in that chapter. When it comes to God's choice, it is the eighth. Seven passed before Him, but God did not choose them. There is the youngest, but he is attending the sheep. So he sent for him, and when he came, He says, "This is he; arise, anoint him." Even a prophet like Samuel might have the wrong thought. There is the outward appearance, the height of his stature. David (a type of the Lord Jesus) is forgotten altogether. He is taking care of the sheep. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." The most difficult thing to control is the mind; it is always active.

You hear a good deal said about concentration these days. Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." The marginal reading is "a constant spirit," not a changeable one, not simply a "right" spirit, but a "constant" spirit. We find the wandering of the mind a great trial sometimes. It is here, there, and everywhere.

Suppose you were asked for a simple definition for "who, being in the form of God," what would you give? How do you and I subsist? What is the manner of our subsistence? We are mere creatures. What was His subsistence? He subsisted as God; He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." It was not an object to be attained or to aspire to. It was the manner of His subsistence. What could be higher?

Satan said to the woman, "ye shall be as gods." That was really the secret of it—seeking to be as gods—self-exaltation. Twice in Luke, in connection with both the sinner and the saint, the Lord says, "Whosoever exalteth Himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" Luke 14:11 and 18:14. The Lord Jesus humbled Himself; then God exalted Him. The first step in the Lord's humbling Himself

was that He became a servant; that is what He never was before; that is what every creature is, though he might be a Michael or a Gabriel. He took upon Him the form of a servant. What creature ever took upon him the form of a servant? A creature is a debtor to his Creator.

This One who subsisted as God humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a Servant and was found in fashion as a Man, a little lower than the angels—it is a lower order of creation. "Who maketh His angels spirits"—they are a higher order of creation than man. "Form of a servant"—"found in fashion as a Man." He connects Himself with a fallen race—became a Man.

"Made Himself of no reputation." That is what man is jealous of having and careful for—his reputation. Reputation and character are two different things. A man's reputation may be different from what his character is. God knows about that. A man may have a poor reputation among men but have a good character before God or vice versa. That passage referred to in Samuel, "God is a God of knowledge and by His actions are weighed," "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue should confess." Does that infer that all will be saved? Some are building doctrines on that. Notice the words: "of things [or beings] in heaven, and things [beings] in earth, and things [beings] under the earth." In Colossians we get in chapter 1:20 reconciliation. Here it is subjugation, the recognition of the Lordship of Christ even by demons. (New Translation). It shows right there that not all are reconciled. If we turn to the passage in Colossians, we shall see the difference: Colossians 1:20: "And by Him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace through the blood of His cross—by Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens" (JND Trans.). There is nothing about things under the earth. They mix the two—reconciliation and subjugation. Here it is bringing back creation. Peace has been made by the blood of His cross. "By Him to reconcile all things unto Himself": that is future; "and you, who once were alienated and enemies . . . yet now has it reconciled" (JND Trans.). That is present.

In passing, let us note that there is not a word about demons or infernal beings in Colossians; the passage does not go beyond the earth at all. In Revelation 5:13 "and under the earth" is another word altogether for creatures that live below the surface of the ground. All will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

"Made Himself of no reputation." When He took that servant's form from another viewpoint we get "Lo, I come [voluntary] to do Thy will, O God." There was One competent and in a position to offer Himself for the accomplishment of God's purposes. The same truth from another viewpoint from John 1: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." He became flesh— became Man, and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory—not as Creator, but as the only begotten of a father. He dwelt among us "full of grace and truth."

A moral school of Universalists that goes further than any of them say that the devil will eventually be saved (as well as Judas and the fallen angels). That would be a one-sided God. They magnify His love at the expense of His holiness.

clickbible.org