

Epistle to the Philippians

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

The Epistle to the Philippians describes the walk and life of one who has apprehended his position in Christ and walks therefore in the power of the Spirit of God.

Scripture: Acts 16:12, Philippians 2:5-25

Topics: "Christian Humility", "Following Christ"

Description

Arno Clemens Gaebelein preaches about the historical background and significance of the city of Philippi, highlighting the apostle Paul's visits, the conversion of Lydia, the demon-possessed girl, and the jailer, and the strong attachment of the church in Philippi to Paul. The Epistle to the Philippians, written by Paul from Rome, reveals the importance of surrendering to God and following the example of Christ in humility, obedience, and exaltation. The division of Philippians into four chapters reflects different aspects of the believer's life centered around Christ as the controlling principle, pattern, object, and strength for all circumstances.

Transcript

The city of Philippi was built as a military position by Philip the Great of Macedon to keep the wild Thracians in check, which were the neighbors of the Macedonians. Later it became a Roman colony by Augustus, as a memorial of his victory over Brutus and Cassius. It was not a very important city. The Jews had not settled there at all, so that the city did not contain a synagogue. In Acts 16:12 Philippi is called "the chief city of that part of Macedonia." This does not mean that Philippi was the chief city of all Macedonia, which Thessalonica was; but Philippi was the chief city of that district and the first city to which Paul and his companions came. The historical record of the apostle's visit to Philippi and how the gospel was preached there, for the first time on European ground, is found in the book of Acts (chapter 16). The conversion of Lydia, her hospitality to the servants of Christ, the demon possessed girl and her deliverance, the suffering of Paul and Silas on account of it, their prayer and praise in the prison, the earthquake, the conversion of the jailer and of his house, are the interesting and blessed incidents connected with the beginning of the church in Philippi. The apostle probably visited this city twice after this (Acts 20:1 and 6), though the details of these visits are not reported in the book of Acts.

The church in Philippi was greatly attached to the Apostle Paul. He had no need to defend his apostleship and authority, for the Philippians had not been affected by the false Judaizing teachers, who had wrought such havoc in Galatia and Corinth. This must have been due to the fact that there were few Jews in that

city. But the apostle evidently feared the invasion of the Philippian assembly by these false teachers. This we learn from the warning given in chapter 3:2. The church itself was poor and had much trial and affliction; yet did they minister out of their deep poverty to other needy saints (2 Cor. 8:1-2; Phil. 1:28-30). They had also ministered liberally to the apostle twice shortly after he had left them (Phil. 4:15-16); he received their fellowship in Thessalonica. The third time they had remembered him. Epaphroditus was their messenger who brought the love-gift to the prisoner of the Lord. In return the apostle sent to the beloved Philippians another gift, this beautiful Epistle, dictated by the Spirit of God.

Written From Rome

That this Epistle to the Philippians was written by Paul seems almost impossible to doubt. "Indeed, considering its peculiarly Pauline psychological character, the total absence from it of all assignable motive for falsification, the spontaneity and fervor of its effusions of feeling--he must be a bold man who would call its authorship in question" (Alford). Yet the critics are bold and leave nothing unquestioned and some have questioned the genuineness of this document. Needless to say the Epistle has not suffered by this foolish criticism. The ancient testimony of Polycarp, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and others mentions this epistle as being Pauline and written by him in Rome, during his imprisonment, of which we read in Acts 28:30-31. The question arises at what time of his prison life he wrote this letter. It was not in the very beginning, but must have been towards the end. The Philippians had heard of his imprisonment and had made up a sum of money which Epaphroditus carried in person to Rome. And Epaphroditus had fallen sick and the Philippians had heard of his severe illness "nigh unto death" (Phil. 2:30). This sickness of their beloved Epaphroditus had been in turn reported to them (Phil. 2:26) and the apostle heard how they had been grieved on account of it. All this necessitated a number of journeys from Rome to Philippi and back. This took a good many months. And furthermore, in the beginning of his stay in Rome he dwelt for two years in his own hired house and seemed to have perfect liberty (Acts 28:30). In his epistle to the Philippians he writes that he is in the praetorium and no longer in his own house. "But I would have you know, brethren, that the circumstances in which I am here turned out rather to the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds have become manifest as being in Christ in all the praetorium and to all others" (Phil. 1:12-13, revised translation). The praetorium was the place where the praetorium guards were kept, next to the palace of the Emperor Nero. He had now been put in stricter confinement and felt his bonds more severely (Phil. 1:18). The Epistle must therefore have been written by him after the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, that is, about the middle of the year 63 A.D.

The Epistle of Christian Experience

Philippians is put in our Bibles between Ephesians and Colossians. A better arrangement is to put this Epistle after Colossians. The Epistle to the Ephesians shows the believer's position in Christ and what he possesses in Him; Colossians reveals the glory of Christ as the Head of the body in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. Philippians also speaks of Christ, but not in a doctrinal way. It is an Epistle which describes the walk and the life of one who has apprehended his position in Christ and walks therefore in the power of the Spirit of God. It shows what manner of lives those should live on earth who are saved by grace and who are waiting for glory. The epistle assumes the knowledge of what the salvation of God is. We therefore find nothing said about justification, peace with God or assurance of salvation. The word "salvation" as used in Philippians has nowhere the meaning of salvation by grace in the sense of deliverance from guilt and condemnation. Philippians shows us what true Christian experience is in the power of the Spirit of God. The words "sins" and "sin" are not found in this Epistle. The true believer knows that his sins are put away and that the old man was crucified with Christ. The question

of deliverance from the guilt of sin and from the power of sin, as so blessedly revealed in Romans, does not enter into true Christian experience. True Christian experience is to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and to manifest Christ in that walk. This the Epistle to the Philippians reveals from beginning to end. The name of our Lord is used over fifty times in the four chapters. He is the believer's life; Christ must be always before the heart and He must be made known by the believer in his life, following Him as the pattern and looking to Him as the goal.

The words "joy" and "rejoicing" are used eighteen times in Philippians. It is the Epistle of rejoicing. "He went on his way rejoicing" is the description of the experience of the eunuch after he had believed on the Lord. The true believer's way should be one of constant rejoicing. The whole atmosphere of this Epistle is that of joy, and so the believer in whatever earthly circumstances he may be placed should manifest the joy of the Lord. Paul, the great apostle, and now the prisoner of the Lord, as years before in the Philippian prison, sends forth from the Roman prison the triumphant song of faith and holy joy. There is not a word of murmur or complaint. It is "counting it all joy" and "glorying in tribulation." He had Christ; He knew Christ; Christ was his all; he knew himself in His hands and the glorious goal was ever before him and the Holy Spirit filled him therefore with joy. And such should be the experience of every believer. The word Philippians means "those who love horses." The racehorse in fullest energy stretches its neck to reach the goal. This epistle describes also the Christian race. This is especially seen in the third chapter where the energy and holy ambition of the new life to win Christ, to attain and to reach the goal is given. The Epistle likewise reveals the real affection and fellowship which exists between the servant of the Lord and those who have received blessing through his ministry. The annotations of this precious little Epistle contain many hints on the true Christian experience and walk.

The Division of Philippians

The division into four chapters is the correct one. As stated in the introduction it is true Christian experience which this little Epistle unfolds, showing the motives which should govern the believer in his life, the energy he should manifest, the resources which are at his disposal and the victory over all circumstances through Christ. The Christian in a normal, spiritual condition as seen in this Epistle has been aptly described as on a journey with an object before him, which is Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is therefore the theme of each chapter. Hence we have four aspects of the true Christian life and experience.

In the first chapter Christ is made known as the all-controlling principle of the life of the believer. Christ is our life; He indwells the believer, and true Christian life and experience is to live for Him and be fully controlled by the Lord. "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). In the second chapter Christ is seen in His humiliation and obedience as the believer's pattern. The One who passed through this life, who left the glory to humble Himself, who was obedient unto death, the death of the cross; He who endured the cross and despised the shame, who is now exalted at the right hand of God and has a name which is above every name, is to be constantly before the believer's heart. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5). In the third chapter Christ is the bright object and the final goal before the believer. In the energy of the new life the believer reaches out after that goal, never satisfied with anything else. It is the desire to win actually Christ, to lay hold of that for which he has been laid hold of by Christ. "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (3:10-11). In the fourth chapter we learn that Christ is enough for all circumstances. The believer, who, like the great apostle, can say, "for me to live is Christ"; who ever follows His path of self-humiliation and obedience, constantly reaching out for the goal, will find that Christ is sufficient for all earthly circumstances. "I can do

all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (4:13). This then is the division of this brief but most important and practical Epistle:

I. CHRIST, THE CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE OF THE BELIEVER'S LIFE (ch. 1)

II. CHRIST, THE BELIEVER'S PATTERN (ch. 2)

III. CHRIST, THE OBJECT AND THE GOAL (ch. 3)

IV. CHRIST, THE BELIEVER'S STRENGTH, SUFFICIENT FOR ALL CIRCUMSTANCES (ch. 4)

Analysis and Annotations

I. CHRIST, THE CONTROLLING PRINCIPLE OF THE BELIEVER'S LIFE

CHAPTER 1

1. The introduction (1:1-2)

2. The fellowship in the gospel (1:3-8)

3. The apostle's prayer (1:9-11)

4. Paul's victory (1:12-20)

5. Paul's life and confidence (1:21-26)

6. Exhortation to walk worthy of the gospel (1:27-30)

Verses 1-2

The introductory words to this Epistle differ from those of the preceding epistles in that he does not mention his apostleship. The reason for this omission is because his letter to the Philippians does not unfold the great doctrines of the gospel, nor does it correct evil teachings. In writing to them about his own experience as illustrating Christian experience, he does so as a member of the body of Christ. Associating Timothy, his son in the gospel, with himself as servant of Christ Jesus, he addresses all the saints in Philippi with the bishops and deacons.

Notice the way the name of our Lord is used in this opening verse of the Epistle: "Servants of Christ Jesus" (not Jesus Christ as in the authorized version) and "saints in Christ Jesus." Christ is His name as the Risen One, as Peter declared on the day of Pentecost, "God has made Him both Lord and Christ." The attention is directed at once to Him as the Risen, Glorified One by putting His title "Christ" first.

Believers are saints, that is, separated ones, and servants in the risen, exalted Lord; He must ever be before the heart in life and walk down here and all service must come from Himself. All the saints are mentioned first and then the bishops and deacons. The bishops are the overseers, who are also called elders; the deacons were ministers. The custom of ritualistic Christendom in electing a man a bishop, who has charge over a diocese, the oversight of so many churches, with certain functions of authority, is not according to Scripture. They had a number of bishops, overseers, in the small assembly in Philippi as well as in Ephesus. Acts 20:28 gives their work and responsibility. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers (bishops), to feed the Church of God,

which He hath purchased with His own blood." And these chosen ones who labor for the flock are to be recognized and esteemed. "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you. And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:12-13). The deacons probably ministered more in temporal affairs. Of bishops and deacons and their qualifications the apostle writes more fully in 1 Tim. 3.

Verses 3-8

And as he remembered them all and thought of their love and devotion he thanked God for them. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now." He remembers with praise to God their fellowship in the gospel, how they took part in the trials, labors, conflicts occasioned by the preaching of that gospel. They had taken a zealous part in the gospel Paul preached and manifested a loving interest by ministering to the needs of the Lord's servant. The remembrance of all which had happened when he was in Philippi and their combined fellowship and steadfastness filled the prisoner of the Lord with gratitude and joy. Therefore he prayed for them continually; he carried them upon his heart and in the prayer of intercession mentioned their names before the throne of grace. How Christ-like this was. He ever carries His dear people upon His heart and intercedes for them.

If we love the saints of God we also will pray for them. This gives joy, courage and confidence. "Being confident of this very thing, that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is meet for me to think of you all because ye have me in your hearts, and that, both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace." (The Authorized Version has it "because I have you in my heart"; the correct translation is "Ye have me in your hearts.") The grace of God had wrought this loving spirit in the Philippians; the Lord had produced all this interest in the gospel and their whole-hearted devotion. And so the apostle is confident that He who had done all this in them, who had begun the good work, would surely complete it until the day of Jesus Christ, when all His saints meet Him face to face. They had him in their hearts, not merely as a fellow-saint, but they had loving sympathy for him in his sufferings and as the one who suffered for the defence and confirmation of the gospel. And Paul, knowing their love and heart-fellowship, in return longed after them. The response to their affection was his affectionate desire. What a blessed illustration of the command of our Lord, "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). How little of this real affection there is among the children of God! How much faultfinding, sectarian exclusion from fellowship, especially among those who claim deliverance from sectarianism, and how little real manifestation of love towards all the saints! It is one of the leading characteristics of the Laodicean condition.

Verses 9-11

The apostle now utters his inspired prayer for them. It is still the prayer of the Holy Spirit for God's people. They had love, but he prays that their love may abound yet more and more. But this abounding love is to be "in knowledge and all intelligence." Love must not and will not tolerate evil. If the heart is fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ, then the Christian will manifest this love in knowledge and all intelligence, having discernment of good and evil. As Christ is before the heart the believer will abound yet more and more in love and also "judge of and approve the things that are excellent." Walking after this rule means to be "pure and without offence till the day of Christ." That day is not the Old Testament day of the Lord, when He is revealed on earth in power and glory to judge and to establish His kingdom, but it is the day for the

saints when they meet Him in the air and then appear before His judgment seat. And such a walk produces the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Thus it is seen that love is the source of everything in the life of the believer.

Verses 12-20

After the words of love and prayer Paul speaks of himself and his circumstances. But how does he speak of that which had happened unto him? There is not a word of murmur or complaint. Not a word of uncertainty or doubt. Not even a thought of self-pity or discontent. He might have accused himself about having gone to Jerusalem ; to create sympathy he might have complained and described his bonds and the sufferings. But he rises above all. Christ is in his life the controlling principle. His own self is out of sight and he bears joyful testimony how all turned out for good, for the furtherance of the gospel. He had written to the Romans years before that all things work together for good to them that love God. In Rome, a prisoner, he shows practically the truth of that statement. The overruling hand of the Lord was manifested in the furtherance of the gospel, even in the praetorium, adjoining Nero's palace. it was enough for him who was so devoted to Christ and the gospel of grace. And his bonds encouraged many in becoming more bold to speak the word without fear. Who were they who preached Christ out of envy and strife, who tried to add still more affliction to his bonds? They were such who were selfish, envying the great apostle for his gifts and power. They were jealous of him. And now when he was in prison, his widespread activities completely arrested, they began to speak against his person and perhaps used his imprisonment as an evidence against him, that claiming too much authority, the Lord had set him aside. By their envy and strife, they would add affliction to the apostle. And yet they preached Christ. The prisoner of the Lord rises above it all. He is not self controlled, but Christ controls him. And so he writes, "What then? notwithstanding every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." God was with His servant; and instead of the self-seeking which instigated these sorry preachers of the truth, there was found in Paul the pure desire for the proclamation of the gospel of Christ, the whole value of which he deeply felt, and which he desired above all, be it in what way it might. His own self was completely out of sight. Christ was his all; in Him he rejoiced and though he was in prison he was filled with joy and the worthy Name was being proclaimed.

He speaks next of his confidence that this will turn out to his salvation through their prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. What salvation is it he means? It is not salvation in the sense of deliverance from guilt and condemnation. Of this the Apostle Paul was not in doubt; for this he did not need the prayers of others. Deliverance from the guilt of sins and from condemnation is the gift of God in Christ Jesus. We are saved once for all by the finished work of the cross. To this salvation nothing can be added. Believers are saved and forever safe in Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). Salvation in the New Testament has two more meanings. There is a salvation for the believer when the Lord Jesus comes again. "We are saved in hope" (Rom. 8:24). And there is a present salvation which the believer needs day by day as he journeys towards the blessed goal. In the midst of trials, temptations, hardships and other perils, victory over all these things is to be gained and Christ's name to be exalted and glorified. The salvation we have in Christ through Christ is to be practically manifested. For this the apostle desired the prayers of the Philippians; for this he needed, and we also, the supply of the Spirit. The latter certainly not in the sense, as some teach, of a new baptism of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer and if the heart is set upon Christ and controlled by Him, the supply of the Spirit will not be lacking. Therefore the apostle's earnest expectation and hope was that he would be ashamed in nothing, that he would be victor in all these circumstances. Christ would be magnified in his

body whether by life or by death.

Verses 21-26

The great principle of his life, the all governing principle, was Christ. He was all in Paul's life. "For me to live is Christ" means that Christ lived in him (Gal. 2:20); he lived by Him and for Him. If death should come it would be gain, for it would bring him to Christ. But he finds himself in a strait betwixt two things. He has a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which would be far better and yet, if he was to live still down here, it was worth his while. Far better for him personally to depart and be delivered from all the conflicts, trials and sufferings; but, on the other hand, the needs down here, the saints who needed him and his labors, induce him to decide to choose "to abide in the flesh," for it was more needful for them. So he decides to remain, no matter what sufferings were still in store for him, so that he might minister unto their spiritual needs. How unselfish! How very much like Christ! Self again is all out of sight. And there is no mention made of Nero and his power. Through faith Paul knew himself not in the hands of Rome but in the hands of Christ.

We must not overlook the argument against the false doctrine of soul-sleep, which is contained in the words of the apostle, "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." This false doctrine claims that when the believer dies he passeth into a state of unconsciousness. If this were true it would certainly not be "far better" to depart, or as the original states, "much more better." Enjoying the fellowship with the Lord is a good and blessed thing. To pass out of the body and to be with Him is "much more better," for in the disembodied state, the saints of God enjoy and know the Lord in a degree that is impossible down here. And the best of all is when the Lord comes and all the redeemed receive their glorified bodies.

Verses 27-30

And now he desires that their life should be worthy of the gospel he loved so well. He wants them to stand fast in one spirit and with one mind striving together for the gospel; this was to be their attitude whether he was present with them or absent. Only the Holy Spirit could accomplish this; He only can give to believers oneness in all things and power to strive together for the gospel. Walking thus believers need not to be terrified by the adversaries, those who oppose and reject the gospel. These adversaries always try to inspire fear, like the enemies of Israel in the land. But looking to the Lord, letting Him govern all things, walking in the Spirit, was an evident testimony of their own promised salvation (which here means the final deliverance) and to their enemies an evident token of perdition. And suffering through which they passed in Philippi, as well as that of the apostle in the prison of Rome, is viewed as a gift of God, just as much as believing on Christ. It is then a gracious, God-given privilege to suffer for His sake. Murmuring and complaining will be completely silenced when suffering for Christ's sake is looked upon as a gift of grace. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets, which were before you."

II. CHRIST, THE BELIEVER'S PATTERN

CHAPTER 2

1. Oneness of mind through self effacement (2:1-4)
2. The humiliation and exaltation of Christ (2:5-11)

3. Work out your own salvation (2:12-13)
4. As lights in the world (2:14-16)
5. The example of Paul (2:17-18)
6. The example of Timotheus (2:19-24)
7. The example of Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

Verses 1-4

This chapter puts before us Christ as our pattern. The path He went is to be the believer's path. He trod the way, and the many sons He brings ere long with Himself to glory are called upon to follow Him in the same way. And what honor, what glory, to be called to follow in the same path! The chapter begins with a loving appeal of the prisoner of the Lord. He reminds them of the comfort in Christ which was their blessed portion, of the comfort of love and the fellowship of the Spirit and the bowels of mercies, the result of these precious possessions of the gospel. And now while they had manifested all this in a practical way among themselves and towards the apostle, he tells them that they would fulfill his joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, united in soul and thinking one thing. That they had difficulties among themselves may be learned from the fourth chapter. And so he desired that all might be one. it is a precious echo of our Lord's prayer in John 17. Nothing is to be done among His people in the self-seeking spirit of strife or vainglory. This is the spirit of the natural man and of the world.

The true way which becomes the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who live by Him and for Him, is to esteem the other better than himself in lowliness of mind, regarding not each his own things (or qualities) but each the things of others also. To walk in such a manner is only possible with those who have received, by being born again, a new nature and walk in the power of the Spirit of God. To be utterly forgetful of self, complete self effacement and self-denial and thus the absence of strife and vainglory and the manifestation of true humility, is the manifestation of the mind of Christ. But is it possible at all times to esteem each other better than himself?

We let another answer: "There will be no difficulty in this if we are really walking before God; we shall be occupied with each other's good, and the one will esteem the other better than himself, because when the soul is really before the Lord, it will see its own short-comings and imperfections, and will be in self-judgment; and according to the love and spirit of Christ see all the good that is from Him in a brother and one dear to Him, and will therefore look upon his fellow-Christian as better than himself, and so all would be in beautiful harmony; and we should be looking after each other's interests too"--(J.N. Darby, Philippians). How true it is, love likes to be a servant; selfishness likes to be served.

Verses 5-11

With the fifth verse begins that portion of the chapter which reveals Christ as our pattern. Christ in His humiliation and His exaltation; Christ who did not please Himself, who was obedient unto death, the death of the cross; Christ, who is now exalted and has a name which is above every other name, is blessedly before us in these verses. There are seven steps which lead down deeper and deeper, even to the death of the cross. And there are seven steps which lead up higher and higher.

His Humiliation

1. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God
2. He humbled Himself
3. He became a servant
4. He was made in the likeness of man
5. He was found in fashion as a man
6. He became obedient
7. Obedient to the death of the cross.

His Exaltation

1. God highly exalted Him
2. Gave Him the Name above every name
3. Every knee is to bow at His name
4. Things in heaven must acknowledge Him
5. Things on earth
6. Things under the earth
7. Every tongue must confess Him as Lord

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The Spirit of Christ is in the believer for this very purpose, not that we should be imitators of Christ, but that His own life may be reproduced in us. We have this mind of Christ in the divine nature. What wonderful grace that we are called with such a calling, to be in His fellowship and follow His own path! Having delivered us from guilt and condemnation we are called to walk even as He walked down here, the author and finisher of the faith.

We trace briefly His path. We behold Him first in His absolute deity, "subsisting in the form of God." He ever was and is God; as we know from the opening of the gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Who can describe what glory was His? And the equality with God which is His He did not esteem an object to be grasped at, but He emptied Himself (This is the correct translation and better than the King James version, "He made of Himself no reputation.") He gave up something which was His; He laid aside His outward glory. Some teach that He laid aside His deity. This is positively an unscriptural and evil doctrine. It is widely known in theological circles as the kenosis-theory, which is so dishonoring to our adorable Lord. He could never be anything else but the true God and the eternal life. He came down from the heights of eternal and unfathomable glory and took on a body prepared for Him, yet in that body He was very God. John 17:5 shows of what He emptied Himself.

The next step tells us that He who gave up, came down. "He took upon Him the form of a servant, taking His place in the likeness of men." Had He taken upon Himself the form of an angel, it would have been a humiliation, for He created the angels. But He was made a little lower than the angels. He took on the servant's form in the likeness of men. But in Him was no sin, so that it was impossible for Him to sin, for

He knew no sin and was in all points tempted as we are, apart from sin.

But the path did not end with this. He who gave up the glory, He who came down and became a servant also became obedient. It was an obedience unto death, the death of the cross. Wonderful condescension and love. It was all for our sake. And redeemed by His precious blood, called into His own fellowship, His way must become ours; we are to follow Him. If we then consider Him and let this mind be in us which was also in Christ Jesus, self will have nothing more to say; all strife and vainglory will be at an end. And this path of giving up, coming down, true humility, self-denial and true obedience is the only one in which there is perfect peace and rest for the child of God. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls.

The description of His exaltation follows. God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name. God raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory. What glory it is! In the first chapter of Hebrews we read that the risen man Christ Jesus is the heir of all things, "made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb 1:4). In Him we have also obtained an inheritance. Before He ever received that glory He prayed to the Father "the glory Thou hast given me I have given to them" (John 17:22). In His glorious exaltation He is likewise our pattern. We shall see Him as He is and shall be like Him, His fellow-heirs. And while we follow in His steps down here we can look upon Him seated in the highest heaven and rejoice that we shall someday be with Him and share His glory. Every knee must ultimately bow at the name of Jesus, even beings under the earth, infernal beings. They must own His title in glory. Yet this does not make them saved beings. Nor does this passage teach that ultimately all the lost will be saved, as claimed by restitutionists and others. The fact that every tongue will have to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord does not mean the salvation of the lost. In Col. 1:20 things, or beings in heaven and on earth are also mentioned in connection with reconciliation, but then the things under the earth are omitted. See our annotations on that passage.

Verses 12-13

Words of exhortation come after this blessed paragraph in which the Lord Jesus is put before us as our pattern. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure." These words are misunderstood by many Christians. It is being taught that Christians should work for their own salvation. This is the grossest perversion of this exhortation. Every true believer has salvation which is given to Him by grace. It is his own salvation; he does not need to work for it. Others say that one who is really saved by grace must work in order to stay saved, and work with fear and trembling. They tell us, if a believer does not keep on working, if he fails and sins, he will fall from grace and is in danger to be unsaved and lost again. This also is Unscriptural; the Word of God teaches the eternal security of all who have received eternal life, the gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. The exhortation does not mean that we must work to keep ourselves saved, but it means that our own salvation which we have in Christ is to be worked out into result. Salvation is to be practically manifested in the life and walk by glorifying Christ. We are to work it out after the blessed pattern of Christ with fear and trembling, not the fear of being lost, but the fear of failure in not walking in lowliness of mind, in true humility and in obedience. This will ever be the chiefest concern of the believer who walks in the Spirit. "It is this, therefore, which is to induce the fear and trembling; not in selfish dread, but the sense of our responsibility to Him to whom we owe our all and whose our life is. Plenty there is to make us serious in such work as this, but nothing to dishearten us. If God has taken in hand to work in us after this fashion, that is ample security for our success. The fact that the apostle was now absent from them, he whose presence had been so great a comfort and blessing to their souls, was only to make them more

completely realize this divine power which was carrying them on to the full blessing beyond" (Numerical Bible).

Verses 14-16

If we thus work out our own salvation, with Christ ever before us as our pattern, following after Him in the same path, we shall do all things without murmurings and reasonings. These are the fruits of the old self. But following Him as our pattern there will be no more strife and vainglory; we shall esteem the other better than ourselves and consequently there will be no murmurings. Furthermore, like our Lord was "harmless and sincere," we shall be harmless and sincere, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, without any self-assertion whatever. And as He was the light down here, so are believers now to shine as lights. As He on earth was the Word of life, holding it forth is what the apostle writes believers should also do, "holding forth the Word of life, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." (See 1 Thess. 2:20.)

Verses 17-18

Three witnesses follow whose experiences tell us that the grace of God can produce such a character after the pattern of Christ in the believer. First, the apostle speaks of himself "Yea and if I am poured out as a libation on the sacrifice and ministration of your faith I rejoice in common with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy and rejoice with me." With death threatening, the prisoner of the Lord expresses His joy. Paul speaks of what the Philippians did, their ministrations of faith as the greater thing; he looks upon it all as a sacrifice and himself and his service only as a libation; that is, he views his own life poured out upon it. Thus he manifested lowliness of mind. In regarding the devotion of the Philippians as the sacrifice, and the devotion of his own life he regards only as poured out as a drink offering (the symbol of joy) upon their sacrifice.

Verses 19-24

Timotheus is the next witness. Of him Paul writes, "For I have no one like-minded who will care naturally for your state (or, who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on). For all seek their own things and not the things of Christ." Many already there lived selfishly, seeking in service their own things and not serving and walking, glorifying Christ. So it is today in the Laodicean condition into which Christendom is fast sinking. But Timotheus, Paul's spiritual son (1 Tim. 1:2) was a blessed exception. He was in fullest fellowship with the apostle, like-minded, who forgot himself completely and cared genuinely for the Philippians. They knew the proof of him, for as a son with the father, he served with the apostle in the gospel. The two, Paul and Timothy, illustrate what it means "to be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (verse 2). And thus it ought to be among all the members of the body of Christ. What a comfort Timotheus must have been to Paul in the Roman prison! What cheer and joy to have such a one with him! What refreshment to his soul! But he is willing to give him up. "But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state." Not seeking his own, in self-denying devotion, he is willing to part with him, so that the Philippians might enjoy his fellowship.

Verses 25-30

Another gracious witness is Epaphroditus. He also manifests the mind of Christ. Epaphroditus was the messenger of the Philippians. He brought to Rome the collection, expressing the fellowship of the church

in Philippi. But he had been taken violently ill in the exercise of his service, "for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death." He did not regard his own life and in this he exemplified the Lord Jesus Christ. "Greater love can no one show than that he lays down his life for his friends." His was a service in entire forgetfulness of self. And when he was sick nigh unto death "God had mercy on him." The Philippians also heard of the dangerous illness of their beloved messenger. They must have been deeply grieved. Then unselfish Epaphroditus was greatly distressed because the Philippians had heard of his illness. In his suffering, nigh unto death, his thoughts were with the saints in Philippi, and he was grieved that they had anxiety for him. It all shows the mind of Christ.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/arno-clemens-gaebelain-epistle-to-the-philippians/>

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