

The Epistle to the Philippians

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the themes of faith, obedience, and the Christian experience as outlined in the Epistle to the Philippians, emphasizing the transformative power of Christ in believers' lives.

Scripture: Exodus 3:5, Joshua 5:15, Philippians 2:1-16, Philippians 3:8

Topics: "Faith and Obedience", "Christian Experience"

Description

John Nelson Darby explores the Epistle to the Philippians, emphasizing the Christian experience of being in Christ and the sustaining grace of God amidst trials. He draws parallels between the wilderness journey of Caleb and Joshua and the Christian life, highlighting the importance of faith and the character of Christ in overcoming challenges. Darby stresses that true Christian obedience stems from a lack of self-will, guided by God's Word, and that the believer's life should reflect the humility and service exemplified by Christ. He concludes that salvation is not merely redemption but a glorious result of our relationship with Christ, who empowers us to shine in dark times.

Transcript

In Philippians we get the experience of the Christian, but no allusion to sin. All the out-goings of the heart - Christ. There is no "if" as to being in Christ, but plenty of "ifs" the moment we get Christ in us. Caleb and Joshua were sustained as examples of the power of faith in the wilderness; that is Philippians, God sustaining in grace where there was only weakness. The wilderness is the production of Christ's life in the circumstances of this life. Canaan is the power of Christ introducing us into spiritual conflict with the power of Satan. Holiness is as needed for one as the other, for the words said to Moses at the bush are repeated to Joshua in the Land (cf. Ex. 3:5, and Joshua 5:15).

The epistle to the Philippians is a pattern of christian experience as it ought to be: the power of the Spirit of God leading in the path of God amid the manifold trials of the path - heavy trials of Christians getting on badly - all seeking their own. But faith cannot be hindered by circumstances in its link with God, nor, therefore, in thoughtful service for men, suited though it might be to the need around. The character of Christ, giving up self, is just what is needed for this.

Philippians 3, presents the energy of divine life connected with a Christ gone up as Man on high. Philippians 2, presents what forms our character down here - Christ came down. The two together give us the display of divine life in us. In one, Paul is on the way to glory and all else is dross and dung - there is no difficulty in giving that up. I may have a very good cloak in a race, but if I want to run I throw it off. What

I get in the other gives me Christ as the object, imparting the mind of Christ, giving up self. If not given up - judged and got rid of - it impedes. The grace without the energy would be human sentiment; the energy without the grace would be stoicism.

210 The terms of the exhortation in Philippians 2:14-16, tell us that what Christ was, we are to be. It is the power in the midst of the reign of evil. It is not the reign of good now. The failure of man was always uniform and immediate, but no failure can break the link of faith with the power of God. The darkest circumstances brighten the light; a candle is nothing in the day, it is seen for miles in the night. Dark times become the times for the manifestation of faith.

It is a great thing to have the right thing, but it is blessed and needed to have the mind of God to carry out the right. Now, if self is at work, this is hindered. See the Apostle's grace in Philippians 2:1 and 2, the mind of Christ is the perfect model of this. Does our energy take the form of a servant? It may be of faith, and with a true heart, but does it take the place of service?

The blessedness in glory is not simply blessedness, but Christ ministering to it. By abiding in Him we get His mind - self nowhere. The man that is walking in Christ is occupied with Him, and sees Christ in his brother, and all the ugliness of self in himself, so he finds it easy to esteem each better than himself. Just because of love the parent sees all the good qualities of his child. The power of good in the midst of evil is learnt in the coming down of Christ from the glory to the cross.

211 Mark another character of the life - obedience (Phil. 2:8). There is nothing so humble and unselfish as obedience, because self does not work at all. The Word forms this: we live by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. There is no truth in the world, but in the Word of God. Christian obedience is not being stopped in a will of our own, but in having no will - God in His Word guiding the new nature.

Philippians 2:12. The contrast is between Paul's work and God's work in the Christian. No deprivation of Apostolic power will stop obedience by God's working in us - only then there is called for more earnestness and seriousness, for Paul was a mighty warrior.

Salvation is the result in glory. Salvation is never looked at as simple redemption, but as the result in glory and blessing. We are subjects of the conflict between God and Satan. What a serious position! Which would you like, Christ's place, i.e., no place; or honour and position in the world?

Verses 15 and 16 describe exactly what Christ was - that is the Christian.

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