

HELPS TO THE STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

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INTRODUCTORY

STUDY I

INTRODUCTION

THE Epistle to the Philippians is built round the thought of fellowship. It is the fellowship of those who are in Christ Jesus, "called to be saints," and it is a fellowship in the Gospel.

The greatest fact in history has been the challenge of Jesus Christ to the world. This challenge is embodied in the Gospel, and for an adequate expression of the Gospel to the world more than individual life and witness is required. In the Epistle to the Ephesians St. Paul gives us the teaching on the Body of Christ—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism"; and he ends with the thought: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The Body of Christ never functions except through a living fellowship. It is powerless in the face of the world, it becomes hopelessly divided in itself and its witness fails to attract the world unless it is a living organism, composed of men and women whose lives have been transformed by the grace of Christ. In the Epistle to the Philippians St. Paul is continuing therefore the thought of the Ephesian message. The Body of Christ involves fellowship. It is this fellowship the apostle would stress as the safeguard of the unity in Christ, through it he would evangelize the world, and because of it he believed God's resources were released in redeeming power to mankind.

St. Paul arrived in Rome about A.D. 60. Nero had been on the throne six years, and although the apostle's entry into the imperial city was as a prisoner under police escort, yet his arrival in Rome marks one of the great epochs of the Faith.

Notice how events led up to this. We commence with the Day of Pentecost. The disciples had heard their commission on the mount: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." They had received the promise: "Ye shall receive power";

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and their orders were explicit : "Tarry ye." They assembled in no sense a team or a fellowship. There must have been much that required to be straightened out and adjusted, but after ten days of waiting on God, the Holy Spirit came upon them. The experience of that day taught the disciples that any day can be a Day of Pentecost. It is simply a question of fulfilling the conditions under which the Holy Spirit comes in power into the Body of Christ.

We sometimes speak of "our unhappy divisions," as though unity of the Body would be secured by an organization for the uniting of Christendom. The apostles were not troubled by our divisions, but their difficulties were separation one from another, criticisms, fears, distrust, jealousies, envies, strife, and these things made the Body of Christ inoperative. The command was "Wait," and they waited until they were of one mind and of one accord. It was when a new harmony was created among them, a harmony both with God and with one another, that the Day of Pentecost dawned. They no longer faced their task of world evangelization as separated units but corporately and in the Spirit, by the new fellowship which they had discovered at Pentecost. Experiences in the years that followed proved again and again that when the apostles lived on the spiritual plane of right relations with God and with one another they never failed in witness to the Gospel by life and message. They learned that the pathway to power was obedience to God.

From the Day of Pentecost the guidance of God was clearly given to the apostles. Philip the Evangelist went forth into Samaria to carry the Gospel to non-Jewish people, and, although some may have misunderstood this step, when the apostles visited the city and saw for themselves the evident working of the Spirit they made a second discovery. God was undoubtedly working through different channels and in divers ways. They must in future not try to guide the Spirit's operations but simply follow where He leads.

Saul of Tarsus was converted and the fellowship again assumed a wider significance. It was in the fellowship of the Body of Christ that the apostles caught the vision of the world as their task. When Paul and Barnabas went forth, the record says : "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and

to us." Here was the Church taking the united step of sending forth apostles to the Gentiles, and it was that action in Antioch which ultimately drove St. Paul, a prisoner, to Rome. Pentecost was the first great epoch in the Church's history, and Joppa (Acts xi) was another. The fellowship at Antioch and the action in sending out missionaries was a third. At each stage the Church had been thrust ever wider afield until when St. Paul arrived in Rome a crisis had been reached in church development. Hitherto Christianity had been mainly confined to the provinces. Now it had a centre in the capital of the world. Junior officials hitherto had been concerned with this new faith. Now it is brought to the notice of the emperor himself. Through the spread of Christianity the Gospel and the empire were occupying the same ground, and yet with two opposing forces. Rome based its power on the principle that might is right. The apostles had no other asset than the Spirit of Jesus. Up to this time Roman civilization had been largely an asset to the apostles, but henceforth the spiritual and the material stood out sharply in contrast, and Paul found that the power of Rome was against him.

This fellowship was very costly. To Paul it meant imprisonment, to others persecution and death, but it triumphed because it was the team which counted, not the individual.

Our first Study is in the underlying principles of fellowship, and already several appear.

1. Acts ii. Fellowship with God involves fellowship with one another. This is a condition for the release of spiritual power.

2. Acts vii and x. Fellowship involves following the leading of the Spirit even though it cuts across our cherished convictions.

3. Acts xiii. Fellowship involves the sacrifice of life service in untried areas.

4. Phil. i. 20. Fellowship may mean the costly service of suffering and persecution.

5. Fellowship in each of the above cases was based on a complete surrender to the will of God, on obedience to the guidance of God, and on a willingness to sacrifice personal interests for the good of the cause.

STUDY II

ST. PAUL AT PHILIPPI

PHILIPPI was geographically a strategic position for the Gospel. It was built on an eminence commanding the high road between Asia and Europe. The mountain range at this spot is depressed, thus forming a gateway between the two continents. It was the Roman battle ground in the war following the death of Julius Cæsar, and here Brutus and Cassius were defeated by Antony and Octavius. It was therefore famous as a place where the destinies of the empire had been decided.

Philippi was a Roman colony with a strong garrison. It was a great trade centre and the link between East and West. Europe and Asia met here, and it was to this place Paul was led by the vision of the man who said: "Come over into Macedonia and help us." (Read Acts xvi. 8-40.)

In A.D. 50-1, on his second missionary journey, Paul reached Troas. Many churches had been established. Should Paul shepherd them, or should he venture forth on the untried paths of a new continent and on a road which must inevitably lead to Rome? This was the question in his mind and on which he sought God's guidance. The vision came clearly and definitely. A man of Macedonia, the representative of an unevangelized race, stood and pleaded: "Come over . . . and help us." Notice how the apostle deals with the situation. His guidance is clear. He is now certain that it is of God. His obedience to it is "immediate" (Acts xvi. 10). He makes every effort to carry out what was ordered. "We endeavoured to go." He is not concerned with questions whether it is wiser to go or to stay, whether the doors are open or shut, whether he will find scope for his gifts or not. All he can say is: "The Lord hath called us," and in unquestioning obedience he follows His guidance. Notice that St. Paul does not regard this as an individual call. It is

still the group he has to consider. He says : " The Lord called *us* " ; and corporately called of God, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke enter Europe with the Gospel. Let us look at this group of men.

Paul was a scholar, a thinker, and a matured Christian of wide experience. He was a Jew by birth, and a Roman citizen. His birthplace was in the Greek town of Tarsus, and there is no doubt he owed much both to Greek thought and philosophy.

Silas was a prominent member of the Church at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 22). He was sent as a delegate to Antioch by the Church. He probably was a Roman by citizenship (Acts xvi. 37). As a leader of judgment and experience he would be Paul's right-hand man.

Timothy, the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother was the young man of the party, and a recent convert from Lystra (Acts xvi. 1). At that time he was untried and inexperienced, and his knowledge of Christian theology must have been infinitesimal, yet he is one of the group for the evangelization of Europe ; why ? Paul invited Timothy to join him so that the team might be his training ground. Timothy had not the wisdom of Paul but he had a vital experience of Christ to which he gave witness.

Luke, probably a Syrian of Antioch and a convert of St. Paul's. It was at Troas, the place of the vision, that Luke joined St. Paul and remained faithful to him for the rest of his life.

This group, therefore, was composed of two tried workers, Paul and Silas, one young convert picked up on the journey, and a doctor who was led to join them when the call came to enter Europe. They were as a team involved in this call of God.

The first converts in Europe. Acts xvi. 14.—*Lydia*, a seller of purple. She was probably a prosperous business woman. Acts xvi. 18—*A woman*, demon possessed. She was a mere chattel, with no political rights. A slave used by her masters possibly as a spiritualist medium and employed to prey upon the superstitions and ignorance of the people. Acts xvi. 30, 31.—*A Roman jailor*. Here were the first elements of a new team, the Body of Christ for Philippi. They represented Jewish, Greek, and Roman races. They

were socially poles apart and never would have met each other but for the Gospel. Religiously their background separated them; for Lydia was a professing Jewess, the woman followed some degraded form of a Greek cult, and the Roman had accepted the stereotyped religion of the State. These persons accepted Christ. They had each an experience of Him which drew them together, and out of this impossible material God began to build up His Church in Europe.

St. Paul writing to Galatians says (Gal. iii. 28) : "There is neither Jew nor Greek, . . . bond nor free, . . . male nor female." Christ, through this team, showed that the race problem found an answer in Him, that religious divisions could not keep people apart who had found Him. This evangelism at Philippi illustrates several points concerning the Gospel :—

(a) The universality of the Gospel comes out in the very call to Europe.

(b) The emancipation of womanhood is emphasized by the fact that the first convert was a woman.

(c) The abolition of slavery is foreshadowed.

(d) The family aspect of the Gospel is illustrated in the fact that at Philippi we have the first record of a whole family being baptized. It therefore shows Christianity as the family religion. Christianity may grip cities, nations, and empires, but if it is to be effective it must be built upon the family.

STUDY III

THE OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE

BEFORE we begin the detailed study of this epistle it is essential that we should form in our minds the general line of thought expressed in it. It will help us to do this if we read the epistle through three or four times. Having done this we proceed to draw up an outline. In the first place it will only be a preliminary analysis of Philippians, but it is important that we should work this out for ourselves. Having done so we may compare our analysis with the following outline, given in Lightfoot's commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians.

- I. Chap. i. 1-2. Opening salutation.
 - i. 3-11. St. Paul's thanksgiving and prayer for his converts.
 - i. 12-26. Account of St. Paul's personal circumstances and feelings, and of the progress of the Gospel in Rome.
- II. Chap. i. 27-ii. 4. Exhortation to unity and self-negation.
 - ii. 5-11. Christ the great pattern of humility.
 - ii. 12-16. Practical following of His example.
- III. Chap. ii. 17-30. Explanation of his intended movements; the proposed visit of Timothy; illness, recovery, and mission of Epaphroditus.
- IV. Chap. iii. 1. The apostle begins his final injunctions but is interrupted and breaks off.
 - iii. 2-iv. 1. He resumes and warns them against two antagonistic errors. (i) *Judaism* (iii. 3-14). He contrasts the doctrine of works with the doctrine of grace; his former life with his present. The doctrine of grace leads to a progres-

sive morality. Thus he is brought to speak secondly of *Antinomianism* (iii. 15-iv. 1). He points to his own example and warns his converts against diverging from the right path. He appeals to them as citizens of heaven. Here the digression ends and the main thread of the letter is recovered.

iv. 2, 3. The apostle once more urges them to heal their dissensions, appealing to them by name.

iv. 4-9. He exhorts them to joyfulness, to freedom from care, to the pursuit of all good aims.

V. Chap. iv. 10-20. He gratefully acknowledges their alms received through Epaphroditus and invokes a blessing on their thoughtful love.

VI. Chap. iv. 21-23. Salutation from all and to all. The farewell benediction.

Having studied the book as a whole we proceed to examine its contents, and to do this we shall need to investigate the meaning of words and phrases. Where sentences seem involved and the meaning obscure, it will help if we make a grammatical analysis, always watching the line of thought and the verses preceding and following the one we are studying. In this connexion note the use Paul makes of the following words: *Grace*: i. 2, 7, iv. 23. *Peace*: i. 2, iv. 7, 9. *Fellowship*: i. 5, ii. 1, iii. 10. *Gospel*: i. 5, 7, 17, 27, ii. 22, iv. 3, 15.

Notice the characters mentioned in the epistle: Timothy, Epaphroditus, Euodias, Syntyche.

It is important in our study to find out what the writer meant, and in this the meaning of words plays a large part. We use words from the Bible in our religious vocabulary, but we seldom analyse their meaning fully. We take their meaning for granted, and our knowledge of great words in the Bible is frequently secondhand. In studying words such as *grace*, *peace*, *etc.*, we want to know what these

words stood for in Paul's own spiritual experience and to find out what they stand for in our own experience.

From words we pass to phrases. Here are a few in this epistle. Many others will occur to us :—

- i. 19 : " The supply of the Spirit of Jesus."
- ii. 17 : " The sacrifice and service of your faith."
- iii. 10 : " The power of his resurrection."
- iv. 19 : " His riches in glory."

When we come to the study of sentences it is important to write out some in full. Take for example iii. 10, 11 : " That I may know him " :—

- (a) " and the power of his resurrection."
- (b) " and the fellowship of his sufferings."
- (c) " being made conformable unto his death."
- (d) " if . . . I might attain unto the resurrection."

Here the verb " know " refers to " Him." No other verbs are inserted, because though the one great object is to know Him, yet to know Him I must experience the power of His resurrection, and to feel this I must share the fellowship of His sufferings. How? By being made like Him in His death (cf. Rom. vi. 11). Only so can I know the power of this new, resurrection life.

From this study of sentences we shall go on to trace out the writer's own line of thought. A sentence such as the above is embedded in a line of thought worked out in chap. iii, and to see Paul's point of view will bring us into sympathy and mental contact with him, and the Spirit of God Who guided Paul will, as He dwells in us, illumine our minds to understand what He prompted the apostle to write. Just as God worked through the mind of the apostle, so He would work through our minds. There are no short cuts in Bible study. The treasures of God's Word are revealed to those who will pay the price in patient, careful study. Let us therefore approach this epistle depending upon the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that by a reverent and thorough study we may learn for ourselves a fuller meaning of the " fellowship in furtherance of the gospel."

STUDY IV

THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE



OW often we have read a letter and puzzled over it to find out why it was written and what it means. Can we in this study imagine the arrival of this epistle at Philippi? Epaphroditus had reached home, the little church was assembled to hear Paul's letter read. They had sent money to Paul; how had he received it? They knew he was in prison; how did he fare? Were people looking after him? On their first reading, affection for the apostle would make them seize all the personal remarks. Epaphroditus would supplement it with an account of how he had seen the apostle, of what he had witnessed of Paul's preaching even in prison. Many, many times it must have been read until it had been memorized in whole or in part by the congregation.

What then was Paul's purpose? He was replying to the loving thought of the Philippians in sending Epaphroditus with money to him, and he uses the opportunity of giving to the church his message from prison. Certain disputes and rivalries had sprung up, but they seem to have been confined to a few in the congregation and the apostle's rebuke is indirect and inferred. He does not wish to hurt their feelings lest it should cause a breach in the fellowship. He therefore emphasizes in his opening words the unity of the Body. He writes to *all* saints and says "every prayer of mine for you *all*," and in i. 7 he adds: "To think this of you *all*, . . . ye *all* are partakers of my grace." Possibly in the quarrel members of the church had taken sides. Paul refuses to side with one or the other. He writes to *all* because he belongs to *all*. He quickly lifts their minds away from themselves and from Philippi to the immense conflict in Rome and the wonderful way in which God has blessed him even as a prisoner. From

his own experience shared with them he calls upon the church to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (i. 27).

He thus leads into his main theme that unity is not the result of organization but of spirit, that it is maintained as individuals are centred in Christ, that the essential condition is the fellowship of the Body corporate. He exhorts therefore that they should have the mind of Christ (ii. 5) as the one cure for divisions. Then follows the picture of Christ in His sufferings and in His resurrection and glory. Then follows a further exhortation in ii. 14: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings."

Here St. Paul turns to personal considerations, his own willingness to be sacrificed, and his faith in the church at Philippi to give their utmost in surrender for the highest (ii. 17). This leads him to tell them how after the arrival of Epaphroditus he will keep in touch with them by sending Timothy to them because of his anxiety for them. Possibly at this stage fresh reports come to hand of heresies which were springing up in the churches, and Paul makes a digression in chapter iii to warn them against being brought under the bondage of Judaism after they have known the liberating power of Christ. He also sees the further danger of liberty being misinterpreted, and he again shares with them his own experience (iii. 4-14) that through it they may learn to be on their guard against "the enemies of the cross of Christ" (iii. 18). The apostle then returns to his main theme and mentions by name two leaders in the church who are causing trouble (iv. 2). He appeals to them to help, not to hinder, and as before he passes rapidly to the positive joy of those reconciled and in fellowship.

The fruits of fellowship are joy (iv. 4), freedom from anxiety and worry (iv. 6), a vital prayer life (iv. 6), and the peace of God as a controlling force of the mind (iv. 7). Leaving behind all thought of disputes the apostle turns to the whole body of the church to express his gratitude to them for their care of him, to tell them how God has supplied his needs, and how He gives even in prison continuous enabling grace (iv. 13). From this he draws for them a lesson of his experience. God has met his need in impossible circumstances

and "*My God*," he says, Who has done this, "shall supply all your need."

Thus the epistle draws to a close with the unbroken fellowship of the apostle with a church in great difficulties and passing through persecution. The main thing St. Paul gives in the epistle is his own personal experience of Christ, and his teaching to the church springs out of this experience.

We shall see in detail the purpose of this epistle, but we should note here the strong emphasis upon Christ as sufficient for every need, upon the demand for a complete likeness to Christ in the Christian character, upon the value of personal experience shared with others, and upon the illustration this epistle gives of a realized ideal and true fellowship upon the basis of surrender to Christ and honesty with one another.

SECTION I

FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL (Phil. i)

Study V. The Opening Salutation, *vv.* 1, 2.

Study VI. St. Paul's Fellowship with the Philippians, *v.* 3.

Study VII. Thanksgivings for the Fruits of Fellowship,
vv. 3-6.

Study VIII. Fellowship in the Gospel, *vv.* 5, 6.

Study IX. Fellowship in Grace and Prayer, *vv.* 7-11.

Study X. Fellowship in Bonds and Sufferings, *vv.* 12-18.

Study XI. Fellowship in Experience, *vv.* 19-26.

Study XII. The Quality of Life within the Fellowship,
vv. 27-30.

STUDY V

THE OPENING SALUTATION (Phil. i. 1, 2)

ST. PAUL'S opening salutations in each epistle have an important bearing on the message he is seeking to send to the church. In Thessalonians he is simply "Paul . . . unto the church." In Romans he is "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." In 1 Corinthians he is "Paul, called to be an apostle." In 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians he is "Paul, an apostle." In Philippians he is a servant.

Writing to Philippians, therefore, he is "the servant" or slave (δοῦλος) of Jesus Christ. Paul is using a familiar Old Testament phrase employed again and again by the prophets to describe themselves (*see* Amos iii. 7, Jer. vii. 25). "It is noticeable how quietly St. Paul steps into the place of the prophets and leaders of the Old Covenant, and how quietly he substitutes the name of his own Master in a connexion hitherto reserved for that of Jehovah" (Sanday and Headlam, *Commentary on Romans*).

1. "*Paul and Timothy*."—Timothy was well known to the church at Philippi. He was, at the time the epistle was written, Paul's companion in Rome. He was with Paul on his first visit to Philippi (Acts xvi. 1, 3, 10, 12). He visited Macedonia later (Acts xix. 22, and xx. 4). Paul was planning to send Timothy to Philippi again (Phil. ii. 19-23). Paul and Timothy are the slaves of Jesus Christ for the sake of the Gospel.

What did this slavery involve? A willing service which is freedom (Rom. vi. 18). Paul was a voluntary bondsman. No other word expressed in quite the same way his attitude to Jesus Christ: an attitude of dependence upon Christ; a recognition of ownership by Christ; an expression of identification with Christ. Compare Phil. ii. 7, where Paul says that Christ took the form of a slave for us,

2. "*To all the saints.*"—St. Paul is not addressing the leaders of the church only but the Body corporate. "Saints" in classical Greek means those devoted to the god, those set apart. The New Testament uses forms of this word for the holy place in the Temple (Heb. ix. 2). It is applied to Christians (Acts ix. 13, 32, 41, and Rom. i. 7). It implies consecration, separation from sin and dedication to God. It implies that a Christian cannot divorce faith from practice and remain a true Christian, hence the further implication (1 Cor. vii. 34) of personal moral purity. It has no meaning except as it is combined with the qualifying phrase: "In Christ Jesus." "Saints" is the descriptive word for those who formed the Christian fellowship of the first century.

3. "*With the bishops and deacons.*"—Our studies in this epistle are based on the thought of the fellowship of the Body of Christ, and at the outset we see two things developing: (a) a living organism where Christ is the Head and the believers are members of one Body in complete fellowship both with their Head and their fellow-members, and (b) a growing organization where church officers are mentioned. Paul addresses the Body corporate, the laity, first of all, and then adds: "with the bishops and deacons." Organism and organizations are not contradictory terms. A church order existed in St. Paul's day (see Acts xx. 17, 1 Pet. v. 1). While our studies will emphasize the fellowship of the Body they pre-suppose throughout an organization through which the fellowship can function.

4. "*Grace to you and peace, from God.*"—Every time St. Paul uses this phrase he is emphasizing the only possible solution to the race problem. He combines two words of great significance. *Grace* is from the common Greek salutation; *peace* (salaam) is the Hebrew form of salutation, and is still used in all Arabic-speaking countries. St. Paul combines both Jewish "peace" and Gentile "grace" in one salutation as a pledge of unity between East and West, between Jew and Gentile in the one Saviour, Who unites all in the one fellowship of His Body; but in uniting them He gives a new and fuller connotation to both words, without which the fellowship would break down.

Grace.—This word was used first of all for that quality in

anything which gives joy, as beauty in a picture. In this way beauty and joy were combined in the word. It then came to mean not simply the abstract quality but the beautiful thing represented, thus it was applied to such a thing as sculpture, to an act, a thought, a speech, or a person. Out of this sprang the idea of favour and thankfulness for a favour not merited. Thus St. Paul uses it of something which gives joy and pleasure, that something, he says, is the free, spontaneous loving-kindness of God. It begins in the free gift from God in forgiveness, and stands for all that God does for a person surrendered to Him, for His wonderful love in Christ. All that the Greeks expressed in the word,—joy, gratitude, beauty, *etc.*,—St. Paul expresses too, but much more, because with him it all emanates from the source of all, God the Father.

Peace.—St. Paul uses this old Hebrew salutation in various ways: "Peace *with* God" (2 Cor. v. 18-21); "Peace *of* God" (Phil. iv. 6, 7). Peace stands for harmony of life. We are out of harmony with God through sin, and this affects not only our relationship with and attitude to God, but also our attitude to ourselves and to our fellowmen. St. Paul emphasizes all these relationships as being bound up in what is involved in Christian fellowship. Peace therefore involves reconciliation to God (Rom. v. 1). It brings with it an inner harmony to our lives which gives new direction, purpose, and aim in life. Life no longer centres in self but in God. Peace therefore is dependent upon our accepting the will of God as the rule of our life. But it carries us much further. We are all social beings and no man can harmonize his life with God and himself without at the same time adjusting his life to his fellowmen, hence every gift of God carries with it responsibilities in regard to our fellowmen. To find a new purpose in life through Christ involves sharing that experience with others and this witness is the first step in a realized fellowship both with God and man.

STUDY VI

ST. PAUL'S FELLOWSHIP WITH THE PHILIPPIANS (Phil. i. 3-5)



THIS is the keynote of the epistle and it contains the germ of what is to be unfolded in the letter. It gives the key to a right interpretation of St. Paul's aim and purpose in writing to Philippi. Note the characteristic words of the epistle here mentioned: "Praise," "prayer," "joy," "fellowship," "gospel."

1. "*I thank my God.*"—Paul's method was to thank God for the strong things in a church and to pray for the things that needed strengthening, and by combining the two he found his message to that church. Thus in the Epistle to the Romans he thanks God for their faith, and prays that he may visit them to impart "some spiritual gift," and the whole of that epistle is based upon faith and its spiritual fruits (*see Rom. i. 8-12*).

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians he thanks God for the grace which enriches them in knowledge and spiritual experience (1 Cor. i. 4-6), and his message emerges out of the thought of God's enabling and sufficient grace (*see 1 Cor. i. 4, iii. 10, x. 30, xv. 10*). For the same thought in other epistles *see Eph. i. 3, Col. i. 4, 1 Thess. i. 3*.

This combination of praise and prayer is the closing note of the epistles as well as the opening thought (*see iv. 6*). There is here no formal thanksgiving, but a note of personal affection which strongly characterizes the epistle. Paul longs to be with them to help them (i. 8). Although his imprisonment is trying he is prepared to continue it if only he can help them and ultimately see them again (*see i. 23-26*). He would give his life for them if necessary (*see ii. 17*). He is anxious about them and sends Epaphroditus to them (ii. 25-30), and he is planning to send Timothy also (ii. 19-23).

In studying this epistle it will help us to understand its message if we can see how strong was the affection between Paul and the Philippians.

2. *Joy* (i. 4) is another characteristic word. The word joy or rejoice is used in this epistle no less than sixteen times. It is joy in the fellowship of the Gospel (see i. 4, 18, 25; ii. 2, 17, 18, 28, 29; iii. 1; iv. 1, 10). It is used in every chapter and always is in reference to a joy Paul shares with the Philippian church. It is no mere emotion. It is a fruit of the Spirit and the outcome of fellowship. It is a sure evidence of the reality of fellowship and Paul, who knows a joyless environment, is writing to a persecuted church and he bids them "rejoice," because he has found an experience in Christ by which he can literally rejoice when everything seems to go wrong. Let us ponder this. The greatest message of joy in the Bible comes from a Roman prison and from a captive chained and bound, yet rejoicing in the Lord.

3. "*Fellowship*" (i. 5) is another characteristic word, and in fact the keyword, because the other things emerge out of it. We shall come across it throughout our studies. Here we want to study the underlying idea. This epistle is marked in Greek by a series of compound words denoting close fellowship and personal intimacy. Note the following:—

(1) *Fellowship means sharing other people's troubles.* i. 7: The A.V. is "partakers"—it is fellow-sharers with me in divine grace. iv. 14, A.V.: "Ye did communicate with my affliction," and Moffatt translates it: "Ye were kind enough to take your share in my troubles."

(2) *Fellowship means striving together in the Gospel.* i. 27: "Fighting side by side like one man for the faith of the Gospel" (Moffatt). The same word is translated in iv. 3 "fellow-labourers." The simile used here is that of an athlete; and fellow-labourers could be translated fellow-athletes.

(3) *Fellowship means that they must be of one accord.* ii. 2: "Being of one accord," or, "knit together in one soul." Moffatt translates it thus: "Give me the utter joy of knowing you are living in harmony with the same feelings of love, with one heart and soul."

(4) *Fellowship means a joint service.* ii. 25: "Fellow-worker and fellow-soldier."

(5) *Fellowship means comradeship.* iv. 3: "True yoke-fellow," or, "My true comrade," and in the same verse we

have another of these combinations translated "which laboured with me." Paul is referring to his Philippian visit and to those who "shared my contest in the gospel."

4. "*I thank my God upon every remembrance . . . always . . . for you all.*"—The apostle who emphasizes so strongly the fellowship of believers is constantly saying "I" and "my," "I thank *my* God." Fellowship springs out of a personal experience of God which begins in the individual soul. Nothing in fellowship takes away the necessity of maintaining that conscious communion with God. On the contrary such real communion with God can only be maintained as one is in fellowship with others. St. Paul says: "My God," "I am crucified with Christ," "I can do all things," "I am not ashamed of the gospel," "I know whom I have believed," "I am persuaded." The underlying thought is: He is mine just as truly as I am His. He has given Himself to me just as truly as He expects me to give myself to Him.

Before we enter into a study of all this epistle involves, and if we study it it will involve a great deal to us, let us pause and ask: Have I really given myself utterly, absolutely to God in the same spirit of real surrender that Christ showed when He gave Himself on the Cross for me? The key of our Lord's life was: "I came not to do mine own will." Is it the key of our lives?

STUDY VII

THANKSGIVINGS FOR FRUITS OF FELLOWSHIP (Phil. i. 3-6)

THANK my God " (i. 3-6). Let us examine in this study what Paul finds to thank God for. (1) "For your fellowship in the gospel." (2) For your continuance "from the first day until now." (3) For the evidence of God's Spirit working among you; "He which hath begun a good work." (4) For your share in God's grace manifest in his "defence and confirmation of the gospel."

1. St. Paul is describing a band of men who, having found in Christ a new life, a new experience of God, a new standard of living, and a new fellowship, seek to share with the world what they have found. The common bond which makes their fellowship real is the Gospel they want to pass on to others. In this epistle Paul uses the word "gospel" nine times (*see* i. 5, 7, 12, 17, 27; ii. 22; iv. 3, 15).

In our last Study we were looking at some characteristic words in this epistle. Our Study has probably already suggested a title for Chapter I. It should be "Fellowship in the Gospel." Fellowship is common to all four chapters. The Gospel is specially emphasized in this. The word is used for what they have found in Christ. What was it?

2. *The Gospel*.—"Gospel" is an old Anglo-Saxon word, Godspell. The Greek word means good tidings. But our Anglo-Saxon word Godspell really means God's story, which contains the twin thought of news which is both divine and good.

(a) "Gospel" used in Isaiah (*see* lxi. 1): "He hath anointed me to preach good tidings." To a people in captivity the prophet proclaims God is coming to save you. This is His acceptable year. He is near. Dimly the Jews saw in the prophecy a Messianic meaning; but our Lord picked up the thread when He said: "He hath anointed me to preach

the gospel . . . this day is this scripture fulfilled " (St. Luke iv. 18, 21). The captivity is to our Lord a parable of a soul bound and fettered. Christ proclaims that in Himself God has come to men, He has come to save, to deliver, to heal the broken hearted, to set free the captives. Christ offered to the people of Nazareth that day in the synagogue, pardon, liberty, and healing. He offered Himself as Saviour to men. Since then that offer has never been withdrawn. Fellowship in the Gospel began for Paul when Christ met him on the Damascus road, and called him to surrender. Paul's response was: "What wilt thou have me to do?" His obedience immediately brought him new life in Christ. What Christ promised in the Nazareth synagogue He fulfilled in Paul and He has been fulfilling His promise in millions ever since. The condition is simple obedience.

(b) St. Mark calls it "the Gospel of the kingdom of God"—meaning God's message to man. When Paul and the Philippians talk of the Gospel they are but trying to interpret God's message to men.

(c) In St. Luke we read of it as "glad tidings of great joy," and we are carried a stage further. It is good news not simply because of God's offer to man of help, but because God had come in the flesh to give the help needed. It is good news because the barriers between God and man fall as soon as man turns in obedience to God. (See in this connexion St. Matt. xi. 28, St. John x. 11.)

(d) The Apostle Paul, having met Christ (Acts ix. 5) and having come into a new experience of God in Christ, had to interpret his experience to the world. He did this in the light of the Cross (1 Cor. i. 17, 18): "Christ sent me . . . to preach the gospel; not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross . . . is . . . the power of God."

(e) He interpreted his experience in the light of the resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 7, 8): "He was seen . . . of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me." To St. Paul, Jesus of Nazareth was the Lord of Glory. He never tired of witnessing to his experience of the living Christ Who met him in redeeming love. The resurrection, as Paul saw it, placed Christ in the centre of the universe, "upholding all things by the

word of his power "; at the right hand of God, " able to save to the uttermost." To him the Gospel was only a Gospel because Christ was the Son of God, unique in His life, supreme in His death, and pre-eminent in His resurrection. Christ *was* the Gospel. This thought is very prominent all through Philippians. The word "Christ" occurs thirty-seven times. Bishop Lightfoot says: "This epistle recalls us from theological and ecclesiastical distractions to the very heart and centre of the Gospel, the life of Christ and the life in Christ."

(f) He interpreted the Gospel in the light of a world need. It was "the gospel of the kingdom of God," and Paul saw it as God's answer to imperial Rome. He saw the Gospel with its moral challenge and spiritual basis to life as the power that would overthrow a world based on materialism. It was God's answer to philosophical Greece. By speculation and research Greece moved not towards God but away from God to a position of cynical scepticism. Paul met this with the declaration that God was knowable because He had revealed Himself in Christ. It was God's answer to orthodox Judaism, that theology and correctness of creed do not produce character.

(g) He interpreted it in the light of his own need and what God had done for him. The Gospel began to work in St. Paul first by changing his relationship to Christ. He had fought against Him and now he yielded his life to Christ and became His servant and prisoner. This changed attitude revealed to Paul his possessions in Christ of grace, peace, joy, strength, fellowship; and through this experience he grew to learn his responsibility to Christ to preach and proclaim His message and to suffer for Him. Notice how these thoughts run right through this chapter (*see i. 7, 27*).

As we close this study shall we pause again and silently wait on God? Shall we ask ourselves what difference does the Gospel really make in my life? Shall we resolve to be all for Christ, yielding ourselves to Him that He may fill us with His divine presence and permeate our lives with His grace, joy, strength, and peace?

STUDY VIII

FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL (Phil. i. 5, 6)



FELLOWSHIP is a relationship involving mutual interests. Verse 5 is translated by Moffatt : " I always pray with a sense of joy for what you have contributed to the Gospel." Dr. Vaughan translates it : " For your partnership in aid of the Gospel." The R.V. renders it : " For your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel."

1. *Fellowship* therefore involves a contribution of some sort, a partnership with others, an effort towards a common goal, a participation with others in a great task. St. Paul thanks God that this young church has participated in the Gospel, shared in its message and power and witnessed to it in Philippi. The converts stood by St. Paul at Philippi and have been loyal to him ever since. They have entered sympathetically into the sufferings of his imprisonment, and they have tried by financial contribution to help him in his difficulties. It is through this fellowship that corporate life and power are generated in a church. The conditions for the release of God's power are two-fold : (1) a rightness with God, and (2), a rightness toward other people. St. Paul is indicating here something that lies at the basis of all apostolic Christianity. Let us look at it further.

In Acts ii. 42 we have an explanation : " They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Here is a fellowship in doctrine which involved for them a true loyalty to Christ as the Lord of Glory as well as the Jesus of Nazareth. They had known Him as Friend, Companion, and Teacher, and this He surely was, but they learned that He was Lord and Master too, and to Him they surrendered the governance and control of their lives. Their attitude to Christ underwent a radical change on the Day of Pentecost. They lost nothing of

His close companionship, but now it was conditional upon their implicit obedience to His will.

It was a fellowship in the breaking of bread. They found the Holy Communion the bond of unity and the safeguard against division. The sacrament was to be God's provision for the divisive forces which would attack Christian fellowship. They could not meet in the sacrament unless they were at one with each other (*see* St. Matt. v. 23, 24).

The ten days before Pentecost were a time of fellowship in prayer, during which differences were cleared away, sins confessed, and a new unity formed among the disciples. Fellowship therefore is both a condition for the outpouring of the Spirit and also a wonderful fruit of the indwelling Spirit.

2. Fellowship centres in Christ. *See* 1 Cor. i. 9: "God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son." Here we touch on the central aspect of fellowship. It is developed in Phil. ii and will form the basis of a later study. For the moment let us see that Christian fellowship has no meaning apart from Christ, and that our brotherhood depends upon our attachment to Him. "As He is so are we in this world." Here is the key, a real likeness in character and life to Jesus Christ. We can have no fellowship with an imaginary figure or a mere historical character. Fellowship involves life, and is possible only because "Christ is alive for evermore," and because He personally enters into a direct relationship with us, offering us His love and seeking for our lives in response.

3. It is a "*fellowship of the Spirit*" (Phil. ii. 1). It is significant that in the chapter which describes best of all what fellowship meant and still means to Christ, St. Paul begins with these words: "If there be . . . any fellowship of the Spirit." He then refers back to conditions of fellowship mentioned above. The thought takes us back to Pentecost as the starting point from which we can understand how Christ enters into human life. He says: "Be ye likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (Phil. ii. 2).

4. It is a fellowship in the sufferings of Christ (Phil. iii. 10). St. Paul led us back to Pentecost to see how the apostles there received the Spirit as the bond of unity, and through it the

new team formed went forth to witness. It is the effects of Pentecost, the price of service, that leads them to the meaning of this verse, "fellowship of his sufferings." They had learnt the joy of fellowship, but they had yet to learn that it is not enough to share the life of Christ. It inevitably leads to the Cross and "His sufferings." The principle is that God entrusts His power to those who hold nothing back, and that being in Christ involves fellowship with Him on all points and in every department of life. The thought of suffering is coupled with the thought of knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection. It is because we share the power of His resurrection that we are willing also to share His reproach.


5. Such a fellowship means sharing other people's troubles with them (Phil. iv. 14): "Ye did communicate with my affliction." "Communicate" means "ye became joint partners," or, "ye went shares in my affliction." Thus a right relation with God gives us a new relation with others. Fellowship with Him means sharing with others all He is to us, sharing, too, their burdens. This is part of the family fellowship, because Christ still shares with us His life, His death, His resurrection.

6. *Does it last?* (Phil. i. 6).—A vital fellowship is the work of Christ. It is real because He began it. It will continue as long as we obey the principles of it, thus allowing Him to perfect it "until the day of Jesus Christ." "He hath begun." "He will perform."

As we study this chapter shall we seek to face the implications of fellowship in our own lives? A fresh self-examination may reveal chaos where there ought to be order, disunion instead of harmony, and defeat instead of victory. If this is so shall we ask God to show us His will, and as He reveals the causes of our failures, shall we put them right?

STUDY IX

FELLOWSHIP IN GRACE AND PRAYER (Phil. i. 7-11)

 HE fellowship of the Gospel involved for St. Paul a personal relationship towards the Philippian Christians, and in vv. 7-11 we have two immediate fruits of fellowship: (a) in v. 7: "Partakers of my grace," (b) in v. 9; "And this I pray."

1. "Partakers of my grace" should read: "Partakers with me in grace." It is from the same Greek word for fellowship, and means "fellow-sharers in grace." To this young church the apostle was teaching a profound truth. He says, we as Christians all share alike in the grace and resources of God. They are available for all. The point he wanted to emphasize was that he, Paul, had no privileges as an apostle that were not available to the humblest Christian in Philippi. The only difference was that Paul had surrendered his life more completely than most Christians. The availability of God's resources is not a question of ecclesiastical rank but of obedience to God's will. All St. Paul had discovered in Christ he wanted the Philippians to share.

2. The young church had entered into this apostolic message of fellowship so much that Paul says that in sharing the grace of Christ they had shared his bonds. "If I have suffered for the gospel so have you. If I have laboured for the gospel so have you." Paul uses two words in v. 7 in this connexion, "defence" and "confirmation." Defence of the Gospel is the negative side, the removing of the obstacles, the breaking down of prejudice, removing of misconception of the message. Confirmation of the Gospel is the positive side, the aggressive preaching of Christ as a challenge to the pagan world. Paul here is sharing his experience of the grace of God as tested by his bonds, his defence of the Gospel to the Jews, and his preaching to the Gentiles, and his witness is that the grace

is sufficient and to spare for he would share God's grace with them.

The thought of fellowship with St. Paul is never detached from the practical issues of life, nor from the problems that face any one who will be faithful to Christ, nor from the personalities that life brings into contact with one another. In all relations of all kinds, in all problems and persecutions Paul gives it as his experience that the grace of God is an enabling grace, sufficient always in every need.

3. This experience of grace brought to St. Paul the need for upholding the young Philippian church in prayer, and for seeking definitely for the church those evidences of grace that would make them living witnesses. In i. 9 the apostle says: "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more." Compare i. 4, 5: "Always in every prayer . . . making request with joy . . . for your fellowship in the gospel," and i. 9: "*This* I pray." Prayer in i. 4 is linked to fellowship of the Gospel. Prayer in i. 9 is linked to fellowship in grace. The important thing here is what the apostle prayed for: (a) that your love may abound (i. 9); (b) that ye may approve the things that are excellent (i. 10); (c) that ye may be sincere and without offence (i. 10); (d) that ye may be filled with the fruits of righteousness (i. 11).

St. Paul is praying for what are the essential and true elements of all Christian fellowship. They are: (1) Love based on knowledge and spiritual perception; (2) self-examination; (3) purity; (4) sincerity. All four are combined in the fellowship of the Body of Christ—"in righteousness." Let us look at them.

(1) *Love*. Paul uses *agape*—love absolute—the inward state of a man in fellowship with God and his brethren. He is thinking of the strain life makes upon love and the demand love makes upon life. He says love demands so much it must be a continuous growth, "abounding more and more," the more we love the bigger are the demands upon our love, and no static quality can meet the need. Love must grow with the demand of the hour. It must be knowledgable love—that love which teaches us to judge circumstances, aims, relations with others, *etc.*, from the standpoint of love. In four epistles, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon,

Paul opens with a prayer for this love. Such love brings with it spiritual perception, for the faculty of spiritual discernment is quickened by love.

(2) *Self-examination*. "Approving the things which are excellent." It may be translated: "That ye may put to the proof the things that differ." The church was faced with many problems, differences of opinion, *etc.*, and the apostle seeks for the Philippians an honesty of purpose, springing out of love, which would lead them to right decisions, prevent them from compromising on moral issues, and thus allow for differences of opinion without any breach in the fellowship.

(3) *Purity*. "That ye may be sincere." It means something pure, unmixed. It is so translated in 2 Pet. iii. 1. What sort of purity is the apostle praying for? One derivation of the Greek word connects it with "sunlight," and if so it means something judged in the sunlight and found pure. St. Paul refers to it again in Phil. ii. 15: "That ye may be blameless." In this fellowship life must be tested by the sunlight. The standard of purity is the standard of Christ to which we are exposed when His light is turned upon our lives.

(4) *Sincerity*, and as the A.V. says: "Without offence." Insincerity causes others to stumble and thus spoils our fellowship with them. Insincerity causes us to stumble and thus spoils our fellowship with Christ. "Without offence" implies both these aspects. All these qualities of life—love, honesty, purity, and sincerity, are summed up in v. 11: "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness." They are not of our production. They are all by Jesus Christ.

STUDY X

FELLOWSHIP IN BONDS AND SUFFERING (Phil. i. 12-18)



ALL fellowship is a question of personalities, and whatever St. Paul is seeking to teach the young churches he is never very far from personal experience. The verses of this study are all about the apostle's bonds and his opponents, and yet they carry one of the biggest lessons of the epistle.

1. St. Paul had prayed that he might visit Rome. He had asked others to pray also. He had sought God's guidance and he felt clearly that he would see Rome (*see* Rom. xv. 28). But he could not foresee all that would be involved in the answer to his prayers. It had meant assault, shipwreck, and imprisonment. The churches that had been asked to pray might well argue: "Your usefulness is cut off; you are no longer able to visit us. The enemy is sowing seeds of discord, and if our prayers have led you thus to Rome surely it would have been better not to have prayed." St. Paul is writing to show his friends that in answered prayer God never makes a mistake, that the most disastrous events can be turned to God's glory if taken in the right way. He therefore seeks to share with this troubled church his experience of God while in captivity.

2. *"The things which happened unto ye have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel"* (i. 12).—Things which they feared would most hinder have made for progress. Paul here used a Greek word from the verb "to cut away before me"—"to clear the way in front," or as we should say to-day, to blaze the trail. The word is used for a new and untried way where there are many obstacles, but where the way opens out. Paul therefore speaks of his captivity not as bondage but as a forward pioneer movement, carried out under the guidance of God. The movement causes much anxiety to his friends, much discomfort to himself, yet in

spite of bonds it is turned into a new and unexpected opportunity.

3. How did the opportunity come? In i. 13 we read: "My bonds in Christ." God turns adversity into blessing when we see our difficulties as part of the plan, hence Paul says his bonds are "in Christ," or for Christ's sake. It really meant that Paul had, when arrested, to surrender his own interests so completely that nothing mattered, neither discomfort nor danger, but only the glory of God. Paul had moreover to surrender his own ideas of how the work should be carried on and trust God to triumph in impossible circumstances.

Fully surrendered, the apostle found that God's power worked through him, his very bonds were sermons of liberty and his prison bars were an open door.

4. In i. 13 we read: "In all the palace, and in all other places." Moffatt translates it: "Throughout the whole Prætorian guard and everywhere else." St. Paul is not speaking of the imperial residence but the guard, a body of soldiers composed of 10,000 picked men. It was men from this corps who had to mount guard in turn over Paul, a chain being used, one end of which was attached to the apostle and the other to the soldier. Ultimately the whole guard heard the Gospel. Had Paul tried to evangelize the troop he could not have found a more effective way, but it was only possible because his spiritual experience transcended his environment.

5. "*And everywhere else.*"—The soldiers talked and the message spread. Visitors were allowed to see Paul, and many a man found Christ in that prison. One such case was Onesimus (*see* the Epistle to Philemon). For two years Paul lay bound by a chain—dealing with inquirers!

6. This seeming disaster of the imprisonment of Paul had challenged the churches and tested their faith. Many "waxed confident" and "were bold"—"without fear." Paul's spiritual triumph restored the morale to a persecuted church. The experience of it taught the churches more than any teaching could. They saw that what Paul had preached he had proved. They seem to have asked what could even Christ do when His ambassador was in prison? Now the answer had come and they knew that Christ could meet every need in every situation, and triumph was certain if any


could surrender their environment to Christ and let Him work out His purpose.

7. *The harder test* (i. 15-18).—Up to now Paul had shown them how his bonds affected the pagan Roman world. But his half-Christian Jewish opponents pursue him to Rome and add to his afflictions. They are heresy hunters and their bitterness knows no limits, so we get this double effect of the imprisonment: (a) Christians are bold to preach Christ (i. 14); (b) Judaizers are bold to attack Paul (i. 15, 16). The apostle says they preach Christ of envy and strife (i. 15). They preached about Christ it is true, but they did not preach Him as supreme, unique, absolute, and final. To these Judaistic Christians He was a human Christ subject to the law, and they sought therefore to absorb Christianity into Judaism. The challenge Paul had to face was: Why make converts when Judaism is a way to God? The battle swings round the apostle. They are more anxious to discredit Paul than to glorify Christ, but Paul says their attack does not matter. They are talking about Christ and people are hearing of Him, and even this God can turn to His glory.

The issue was the missionary problem of personal conversion from a non-Christian faith to Christ. Had Paul compromised here there would have been no Christian Church. This same issue is true in India to-day in conversions from Hinduism and Islam. The apostle here is leading up to his great exposition in chapter ii of Christ in His humiliation and glory.

STUDY XI

FELLOWSHIP IN EXPERIENCE (Phil. i. 19-26)

 HE apostle had shared with his Philippian friends his bonds and what they were meaning for the Gospel, his pagan environment and his spiritual experience, his Judaizing Christian opponents and their half faith and plausible philosophy. All this made enormous demands upon Paul and he asks them to share the burden of it in two ways : (a) by " your prayer " (i. 19) ; (b) by the " supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ " (i. 19).

1. "*Your prayer.*" See i. 4, and note the contrast : " In every prayer of mine." Prayer for people involves their praying as well as the person they ask to pray for them. It is this double side of prayer which makes fellowship real. Fellowship in prayer was due (a) to St. Paul's understanding of their need and to his explanation of what he was praying for for them ; (b) to St. Paul's explanation of his experience in Rome both in its joys and in its difficulties so that they could intelligently pray ; (c) to Paul's definite request for their prayers. Notice how often the apostle sought the prayers of the churches. Rom. xv. 30 : " Strive . . . in your prayers to God for me that I may be delivered " (see also 2 Cor. i. 10, 11 ; Eph. vi. 18 ; Col. iv. 2). In these verses he asks prayer for deliverance, utterance, and an open door, and here in Phil. i. 19 he asks them to pray that he may have a " supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." He had started out with great hopes ; but he had angered the Jews, roused opposition even from some Christians, stirred up both the Romans and Greeks against him, and he ends up in Rome in prison ! But, he says, it will turn out " for my salvation." The discipline of life lived on the level of the will of God always leads ultimately to spiritual victory.

2. "*The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*" Lightfoot translates it : " Bountiful supply," and says the word is

used for something additional and extra. The apostle is in prison, abused, misunderstood, in great danger, and he practically says my one and only asset is "the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The Spirit of Christ means courage, faith, gentleness, and love. The verse may be translated: "The supply which the Spirit gives," or, "The bounteous supply which is the Spirit." Both are possible translations and they are counterparts of the one meaning, for the Spirit is both the giver and the gift (*see* Rom. viii. 9; Gal. iv. 6). St. Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ in order to convey a special meaning. It is the Spirit by which Christ lived, the secret of His holy life, the cause of His resurrection. It must therefore have meant to Paul the Spirit Who produces Christ-like qualities and gives Christ-like power. Think of this in connexion with the prison environment.

3. He seeks for prayer that through the Spirit Who enabled Christ to endure the Cross (Heb. ix. 14), "I may not be ashamed" (Phil. i. 20); that as Christ was utterly fearless in the will of God so "with all boldness" *etc.* (Phil. i. 20); that as Christ lived entirely for the glory of God so "Christ shall be magnified in my body" (i. 20); that as Christ was ready for life or death so Paul says "whether it be by life or death" (i. 20). The Spirit of Jesus meant to Paul that nothing mattered so long as he was living a guided and controlled life in the will of God because, he explains (i. 21), "life to me is Christ."

This is the climax of this section: "For me to live is Christ." Life had henceforth only one meaning for Paul and only one interpretation. It was all summed up in the one word, *Christ*. St. Paul is using a very emphatic Greek phrase. Whatever life may be to other people *to me* it is Christ. This is not a boast but personal conviction, born of a deep experience under the most adverse conditions.

Let us ponder these words: "Life is Christ." Is this true of us? Apart from Christ life is purposeless. In Christ it finds direction and harmony. And equally truly St. Paul can say: "Death is gain."

4. Having reached the point of being willing to live or die for Christ he receives the assurance that he will be released, and in i. 25 he gives his reason "for your progress"—again

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the same word as i. 12 for the forward movement. He foreshadows a big, aggressive campaign in Philippi which will deepen their faith and bring great joy to the church. But what an evangelist. He never thinks of himself. He is always planning a new campaign, seeking to extend the Kingdom. Faith shines through the bars of the prison and carries the Gospel across Rome and ultimately opens the door for the apostle and sets him free once more.

STUDY XII

THE QUALITY OF LIFE WITHIN THE FELLOWSHIP (Phil. i. 27-30)



HIS section opens with: "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel" (i. 27), and the word conversation is misleading. The word means in modern English verbal intercourse with one another, but Paul uses a word which expresses citizen life, and he applies it to members of the Christian community. He had used this word also in Acts xxiii. 1 in reference to his manner of life as a citizen among the Jews. Otherwise it is nowhere else used in the New Testament except Phil. i. 27. It has therefore a peculiar significance in its use in this epistle. It is used in 2 Maccabees vi. 1 of the Greek attempt to make the Jews give up their faith, and in 2 Maccabees xi. 25 of Antiochus's sanction that they should live "according to the custom of their forefathers." Paul is therefore using an illustration drawn from civic life of the corporate Christian responsibility, of the heavenly citizenship. He is speaking to them not as individuals, but as members of a Body. He says literally: "Live your citizenship."

He is writing from the capital of the Roman Empire to the members of a Roman colony proud of their citizenship, and he applies this to the corporate life of a Christian.

1. *Your citizen life must be worthy of the Gospel.*—A Roman would die rather than dishonour the proud name of Rome. Paul says let your corporate Christian life be such as will commend the Gospel. Individual Christianity is not enough. The test of our faith is our relation to the Body. We cannot be worthy of the Gospel unless we are members one of another, because the Gospel is a fellowship which forbids any man to live in isolation and unto himself. This is further illustrated from the way St. Paul uses the word "worthily," Rom. xvi. 2 and Eph. iv. 1 (R.V.): "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith

ye are called . . . endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit " (see also Col. i. 10, 1 Thess. ii. 12, 3 John 6).

Think of this message in relation to the divided state of Christendom, the divisive forces which make for separation rather than unity, and the weakness of our presentation of the Gospel because we always hunt for other people's heresies rather than strive for the unity of the Spirit. Does our corporate life to-day in the Church commend the Gospel?

2. *Your citizen life must be Christ-centred.*—The apostle says: "Whether I come and see you or be absent." This little church owed everything to Paul and they were in danger of leaning on the apostle rather than Christ. It was not an apostolic life which they were called upon to live but a Christ-life, where they could for themselves maintain personal and sustained communion with God. It was a question whether their faith was secondhand, borrowed from the experience of St. Paul; or whether they as a church had learnt the secret of the indwelling Christ through Whom they found their own experience of God firsthand. If they depended on the apostle they were parasites. If they had learned the secret of divine life theirs would be a creative faith and an expanding fellowship. St. Paul's imprisonment may for this reason have been a blessing in disguise, because it would teach them as a young church to stand upon their own feet.

3. *Your citizen life must be marked by certain characteristics.*—
(a) *Steadfastness.* "That ye stand fast in one spirit" (i. 27). It implies a firm stand or a good foothold in order to hold one's ground. St. Paul is again drawing his metaphor from the combats in the Roman theatre where men fought for their lives. The Christian life is such a fight,—in the arena is the Church in conflict and the spectators are the Church triumphant (see Heb. xii. 1). Such a conflict demands not only courage but combination if victory is to be won. This is only possible where the individual does not think of himself but the fellowship, and through the fellowship of the whole cause at stake. Notice how St. Paul uses steadfastness: in connexion with faith, 1 Cor. xvi. 13; liberty, Gal. v. 1. (See also Rom. xiv. 4; 2 Thess. ii. 15; Phil. iv. 1.)

(b) *"Stand fast in one spirit."* Is this a reference to the Holy Spirit? This phrase is used in other places in reference

to the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor. xii. 13, Eph. ii. 18). Lightfoot says the reference here is to the spirit animating the fellowship, a oneness of spirit. This does not exclude the thought that such oneness of spirit is only possible as the Holy Spirit operates upon our spirits. The apostle tells them to stand firm (making no compromise with evil), to stand shoulder to shoulder (preventing all breach in the fellowship), to stand united in one spirit (united in and through the unifying power of the Holy Spirit).

(c) "*Stand fast . . . with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*" Bonds of union do not last without an agreed objective; that, the apostle says, is "the faith of the Gospel." If individuals can become self-centred how much greater is the danger of a church becoming self-centred, finding its fellowship and social and spiritual life all absorbing. But a self-centred fellowship breaks up ultimately in factions, parties, and schisms. The antidote is this agreed objective. The faith of the Gospel was to be so supremely worth while that all other objectives would fade into insignificance. This means that evangelism must hold a primary place in the life of the Church in every generation if the Church is to live, because every generation needs converting.

4. *The difficulty of the task.*—(a) "In nothing terrified by your adversaries" (i. 28), or, "that ye be not scared." The apostle says your persecutors will think that your fearlessness must inevitably lead to your destruction, because you are attracting the notice of imperial Rome and its combined power will crush you. But your fearlessness really is a token of victory, of salvation, because God is behind your fearless witness and not all the might of Rome can stop it.

(b) Fear was their danger: It would weaken their witness; it would strain their loyalty; it would break their fellowship. This reminds us of the disciples' experience at the crucifixion: "They all forsook Him and fled," and until Pentecost restored their morale, fear had broken their fellowship.

(c) The apostle tells them to accept suffering as part of the plan in the spread of the Gospel just as the Cross was necessary for their redemption (i. 29). In this he speaks from experience (i. 30) for he was going through the same conflict.

SECTION II

FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT (Phil. ii)

Study XIII. The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Fellowship Life, *vv.* 1-4.

Study XIV. The Place of the Cross in the Fellowship Life, *vv.* 5-8.

Study XV. The Place of the Resurrection in the Fellowship Life, *vv.* 9-11.

Study XVI. The Christian in the Fellowship Life, *vv.* 12-16.

Study XVII. The Cost of Fellowship to the Apostle, *vv.* 17-30.

STUDY XIII

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE FELLOWSHIP LIFE (Phil. ii. 1-4)



WE have studied chapter i to see what fellowship in the Gospel involves, and the apostle is now carrying the thought into the higher regions of Christian experience, but he is building his teaching upon what has already been taught hence he begins with a thought which is connected with i. 5. If your fellowship in the Gospel has brought you consolation and comfort, if your fellowship in the Spirit means anything, then the resultant issue must be unity, accord, love, humility, and unselfishness. If chapter i dealt mainly with a common objective—the Gospel—before the church, chapter ii brings us to the necessity of a common centre of unity. The objective cannot be realized without the centre, Jesus Christ. Through the Holy Spirit we see Him as central to all fellowship.

1. *The work of the Holy Spirit* (ii. 1).—There are four words used here, each with a significance of its own: (a) Consolation, (b) encouragement, (c) fellowship, (d) compassion.

(a) *Consolation* is from the same word as that used in St. John's Gospel for the Holy Spirit, and translated Comforter. Fellowship has brought you into an experience of Christ where you see Him by your side as Counsellor, Guide, Advocate, and Friend.

(b) *Encouragement*. The A.V. translates it "comfort of love." The idea is incentive or encouragement. It is really love's incentive: If love exerts any power over you then be like-minded.

(c) *Fellowship of the Spirit*. There is a twofold idea here of partnership with the Spirit and participation in the Holy Spirit. As we become temples of the Holy Spirit and He indwells us (see 1 Cor. vi. 19) we become co-partners with Him in His grace and gifts (see Gal. v. 22-26 where St. Paul is

dealing with the same question of unity and brings out the same thought that unity can only be attained by the Holy Spirit).

(d) *Compassion* or sympathy with others. This appeal for fellowship and unity is based therefore on a fourfold plea: *consolation*, the companionship of Jesus demanding fellowship as our response to Him; *encouragement*, the surrender to the constraining power of His love; *fellowship*, the sharing with others all He is to us; *compassion*, obedience to the impulse of sympathy for those in need.

2. *Fruit of the Spirit* (ii. 2).—Consolation, encouragement, etc., are not ends in themselves. They are means to an end. Because of these the apostle says: (1) "be like-minded," (2) "having the same love," (3) "being of one accord," (4) "of one mind." Here then are four counterparts to the four grounds of appeal. *Like-minded* means to be "on the same side," "having the same objective," where heart, mind, and will are all directed to the one end. *The same love*. One objective requires one common driving force, love only. Love to God and to others can be the only motive power. *One accord* or *soul*. This implies a perfect harmony, *esprit de corps*. This fellowship means a harmonized corporate life due to the unifying force of a common love. *One mind*. The unity of life in all its relations.

The Holy Spirit therefore produces in us a fellowship which is a unifying force. He unifies our objective, aims, ambitions, ideals. He unifies our wills by a common love. He unifies our service by a harmonized corporate life. He unifies our whole lives by right relations in all things.

3. *The demands of the Spirit* (ii. 3).—Here we touch the practical question of the way to realize in actual experience the fellowship spoken of. (a) *Nothing through strife*. The apostle is speaking of party strife or faction due to self-seeking within the Church. The vision gets blurred and we lose our sense of proportion when our zeal is untempered by love, when we deny to others that liberty of thought we demand for ourselves, when we hunt other people's heresies instead of seeing our own sins and failures, when we mistake party points of view for the everlasting Gospel.

(b) *Nothing through vainglory* or personal vanity. To the

Jews the temptation was to cherish a conceit due to the idea of their having an exclusive call, prestige, and prerogative. St. Paul's appeal was that in Christ they must be willing to share every privilege of Israel with the "unclean" Gentile. To the Gentiles the temptation was to cherish a conceit due to the idea of their freedom of thought which prided itself on breadth and condemned others for their narrowness. Vainglory is the failing of all sections of the Church, whether liberal or conservative, once they lose that vital experience of Christ generated in the fellowship of the one Body.

(c) *Lowliness of mind*. Humility is the secret of unity. It is the humility that hides itself in service for others (see St. Matt. xi. 29: "I am meek and lowly in heart"). St. Paul had had to learn this by hard experience. He brought his old self-life, with its pride, to the Cross. He says (Gal. ii. 20): "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

(d) Not looking each on his own things but also on the things of others (ii. 4). Each here is in the plural and means each party or faction in the Philippian church. Each party sought to gain party advantages. They fought for party place and stood for a party loyalty, and they gained nothing beyond a party strife and faction. What would the apostle say of our own party strife to-day? Would he excuse it? If not, how does this chapter reveal his method of dealing with it?

STUDY XIV

THE PLACE OF THE CROSS IN THE FELLOWSHIP LIFE (Phil. ii. 5-8)



HE apostle gathers up all the thought of the previous Study into v. 5 where he says: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

1. St. Paul regards this fellowship as so essential to the growth, life, and future of the church that he carries his thought back to the Cross and to Christ, that in the light of His redemptive love and sacrifice factions may die and fellowship may grow. Verse 5 has been translated in various ways. One translation reads: "Cherish the disposition which dwells in Christ Jesus." Moffatt says: "Treat one another with the same spirit as you experience in Christ Jesus." Compare this with i. 19. Paul in Rome was being tested on the very thing he is speaking about. He was proving that nothing less than the very mind of Christ would enable him to live the Gospel before Romans, Jews, and Christians, hence his request for their prayers for him that he might receive "an abundant supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

2. This chapter goes very much deeper than chapter i. People may unite in some form of service and agree temporarily to sink their differences or to ignore the things which divide. Their fellowship may never reach to the things which divide hence they always live on the surface. The apostle could not agree to any such makeshift. He delves deep into the thoughts and imaginations, to the impulses and motives, to the age-long historical differences and divisions. He drags them out into the open and says: "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." He is thinking of the active impulse in Christ from which His action sprang, the reasons why He was willing voluntarily to die on the Cross. St. Paul in Rom. xii. 2 says: "Be ye transformed by the renewing

of your mind." In other words a remade mind always leads to a transformed life. The cause of division lies in the mind. Notice how frequently Paul refers to the mind—Phil. ii. 2 : "Be of one mind" ; iii. 16 : "Let us mind the same things" ; iii. 19 : "Who mind earthly things" ; iv. 10 : "Your care of me" ; iv. 10 : "Wherein ye were careful." Paul knew how uncontrolled thoughts and unguided imaginations are always a source of discord. They break the fellowship. They lead to misunderstanding. He therefore demands "oneness of mind," but where is there one standard—the highest—to which all in the fellowship can approximate? It is in "the mind of Christ."

3. *Let the governing impulse in your life be the same as was in Christ.*—What was the impulse and aim in Christ's life and where did it lead Him? If you can find what governed His life and action you have found the centre of fellowship and unity. This is no mere imitation of Christ but a reproduction of His mind and life in us. The apostle answers the question in ii. 6-8. He shows us complete self-abnegation, self-denial, and self-sacrifice. But to explain that these things governed Christ's life is not enough; we want to know why they governed His life, why He was selfless. What was the one motive? If we can discover this we shall find the divine motive and principle for all life. There is only one simple answer: The principle as well as the driving force of Christ's life was love.

4. *The eternal Christ in the likeness of men.*—(a) "The form of God." It means the essential attributes of God. See Col. i. 15 : "The image of the invisible God," and Heb. i. 3 : "The express image of his person." (Cf. Heb. i. 1, 2 : "God . . . hath spoken unto us by his Son.") These words give us the picture of Christ possessing all the attributes of God, His true likeness and character. The message put out by the Jerusalem Missionary Conference in 1928 said : "He [Christ] is the revelation of what God is and of what man through Him might become." Both ideas are central to this passage. The apostle leads us to this conclusion. The centre of fellowship and unity is in Christ because the eternal purpose of God for mankind is a purpose eternally expressed in self-giving love and sacrifice.

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(b) This eternal principle is illustrated in time by the Incarnation, exemplified in the life of Christ, and proved to be true by the Cross. Thus St. Paul gives us the stages in the descent :—

1. Christ's descent from heaven to earth.
2. Christ's descent from glory to shame.
3. Christ's descent from power to servitude.
4. Christ's descent from life to death.

No words can adequately convey the tremendous issues in the humiliation of our Lord and His obedience unto death, "even the death of the cross." But the apostle says that the mind which purposed, planned, and carried to completion this self-sacrifice was the mind of Christ ; and that, he says, is the mind, in all implications, we must have if we are to be members of the one Body.

5. *The demands of Christ's sacrifice upon us.*—(a) Sacrificial love means that the self life must die, and with Paul we must be able to say : "Not I but Christ." (b) Humility means the loss of things the world most cherishes, pride of rank, place, and position. (c) Courage is perhaps the greatest trait of all here, for Christ faced death and shame when it was not compulsory. The door of escape stood open to the last, but voluntarily He yielded His life "a ransom for many." (d) Compassion is seen in His utter pity for a sin-burdened world. (e) Forgiveness is seen in His acceptance of suffering without any thought of retaliation or vengeance. St. Paul says : "Let this mind be in you," the very disposition and spirit of Christ, that in this fellowship life you may find your true centre in Him, your power through Him, and thus you may show forth those characteristics which meant so much to Him. The pathway of the believer runs beyond Bethlehem and the manger cradle. It always leads to the mount called Calvary.

STUDY XV

THE PLACE OF THE RESURRECTION IN THE FELLOWSHIP LIFE (Phil. ii. 9-11)



ST. PAUL'S task in teaching young churches was to show that Jesus of Nazareth, Who had humbled Himself even to the death on the Cross, was actually the Lord of Glory exalted to the right hand of God.

1. If the apostle had ended his message at the Cross Judaism could easily have absorbed Christianity, but the fact of the resurrection explains the sacrifice and love revealed at Calvary. In these verses we have therefore the second half of the picture. The Cross was the way to the resurrection, death was the entrance into fuller life, and suffering was the beginning of transfiguration.

2. St. Paul knew that it was not enough to invite people to meet Christ or to surrender to Him. They must know Whom they are meeting and to Whom they are yielding their lives. Notice (Acts ix. 5) how St. Paul's first question when he met our Lord on the Damascus road was: "Who art thou, Lord?" It was only subsequent to this and because of the answer he received that he said: "What wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) Notice how St. Paul emphasizes Christ's resurrection all through his epistles as evidence of the fact that He is actually alive now (1 Thess. i. 10, 1 Cor. xv. 1-10, Rom. i. 4). Notice, too, how arising out of this fact all the apostles teach the divinity of Christ: St. Paul, Col. i. 9-18; the writer to the Hebrews, Heb. i. 1-3; James (ii. 1); Peter (1 Peter ii. 6-8). It falls to St. John to provide the link between the fact of an ever-living Saviour and our fellowship in Him (see 1 John i. 1-3). Our fellowship is with the Father and His Son.

3. These stages in our Lord's exaltation should be viewed in connexion with Eph. i. 10: "That in the . . . fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ,

both which are in heaven, and which are on earth ; even in him." Creation centres in Christ and moves towards unification in Him. To accomplish this, more than the coming of a prophet was needed ; because He is the Son of God, with all power given unto Him, He is *the* goal of all spiritual aspiration, not one goal among many, but the ultimate, absolute, and final revelation of God to man.

4. We saw in the previous Study how the steps in Christ's humiliation were all leading to the full reconciliation of man to God through the blood of the Cross. Here we are given the steps in Christ's exaltation, all leading to man's fellowship with God. There are five main stages : 1. God hath highly exalted Him. 2. Given Him a name. 3. A name above every name. 4. That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow. 5. Every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. It is well to look at these verses, ii. 9-11, very carefully. Verse 9 says God hath exalted Him, v. 11 says man must exalt Him. In other words man must not give Christ any lower place than God hath given Him. He is the Lord of Glory, exalted highly, and Paul uses a word nowhere else used in the New Testament to try to express how highly God exalted Him. It means without rival or equal, the One alone in all the world's history Who is worthy to receive man's full and absolute surrender.

5. *The Name above every name.*—Notice the sequence of thought : (1) The Name. (2) The Name above every name. (3) The Name of Jesus. (4) Jesus Christ is Lord. It is not a name but "the Name." Lightfoot says : "Here we should look to a very common Hebrew sense of 'Name,' not meaning a definite appellation but denoting office, rank, dignity." But this and the following verses makes it clear that St. Paul was thinking of the Lordship of Christ, and in order to emphasize it he brings together the double Name of Jesus Christ ; Jesus denoting our Lord's humanity, and Christ His divinity, thus bringing out the conquest of the Cross and the triumph of the resurrection. The Lordship of Christ was based on both the humanity and the divinity of our Lord. The two cannot be separated because the Jesus of history is the Lord of Glory. Because He is the Christ of God, alive for evermore, able to save to the uttermost, every

knee shall bow to Him. (a) Bow in submission (*see* Isa. xlv. 23). The whole message of the chapter leads up to this act of surrender. (b) Bow in worship (*see* Rev. vii. 9-17). Surrender brings an enriching experience of Christ and we bow in worship. "Thou art worthy to receive honour." (c) Bow in prayer (*see* Eph. iii. 14). St. Paul speaks of bowing the knee in prayer in preference to standing on specially solemn occasions. (*See* his prayer in Eph. iii.)

7. *Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.*—St. Paul emphasizes that witness means witness to a known Person to Whom we have yielded our lives. It is the open confession of a new allegiance and it centres in the Lordship of Christ. "To confess" means to proclaim with thanksgiving. Note St. Peter's confession on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 36). (*See* 1 Cor. xii. 3 for the implication of such confession.) The whole message culminates in: "To the glory of God the Father." What is to be the glory of God? It relates back to the confession. Witness may be for self-gratification, pride, vainglory (*see* i. 15), but real and effective witness can only be to the glory of God.

Refer now to the key verse of the chapter: "The fellowship of the Spirit," and relate this thought of Christ in His Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension to the demand of ii. 5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

STUDY XVI

THE CHRISTIAN IN THE FELLOWSHIP LIFE (Phil. ii. 12-16)



THE apostle has given us two amazing pictures of the Cross and the resurrection showing how the humble Prophet of Nazareth, ignominiously crucified, was none other than the Lord of Glory. He leads us from this to the central fact of all Christian experience, that the fellowship life is life centred in Christ and in Christ alone. The command of ii. 5: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus," has now a much wider significance for us, for we can interpret it in the light of the Cross and the resurrection.

1. The apostle's first word is a call for obedience. Note ii. 8: "He . . . became obedient unto death." Our obedience to God is based on nothing less than the following of Christ in the pathway of the Cross. Before Paul can carry this young church into the deep experiences he wishes to share with its members he reiterates the need for an absolute obedience to God's will as it is revealed to them day by day. "Not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence." They were in danger of leaning upon Paul rather than finding their spiritual life direct from Christ. Paul says they must stand on their own feet. How often we fail when left to ourselves. We depend on meetings, groups, conventions, *etc.* Some day all these props will be withdrawn and God will ask us to step out alone and in faith. Obedience will then be the test of the reality of our experience. Was it direct from Christ or borrowed from friends?

In this connexion let us go back to ii. 8. Christ obeyed. Even when alone He cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He obeyed when thick darkness surrounded Him; and obedience carried Him through to a

glorious resurrection. True obedience means following God at all costs and wherever He leads. He always offers abundant grace.

2. "*Work out your own salvation*" (ii. 12).—The same word, "work out," is used in Rom. v. 3, 4: "Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope." This verse gives us the human side, "work out," or as it might be translated, "carry through," and the divine side: "It is God who worketh." How are we to work out our salvation? The same word to "work out" is used in St. John vi. 27. It involves labour such as a sower bestows on his field in ploughing, weeding, sowing, *etc.*, until the harvest. (For aspects of salvation see Rom. viii. 24, Eph. ii. 5, 8, 1 Cor. xv. 2, and Rom. v. 9, 10.)

"To work out" is Paul's challenge not to stop half-way. The laws of spiritual growth place responsible tasks on the believer. If God is to energize us with divine power we must do our part. (a) The apostle would have us work it out by a constant and sustained communion with God. This is possible if we have a living faith and if we live an obedient life.

(b) We can work it out by regular study of God's Word. Bible study feeds our prayer life. It gives direction to our thoughts and it reveals to us the mind of God.

(c) We can work it out satisfactorily only as we do so in fellowship with others. If our spiritual life is unshared with others it has no outlet, and life without an outlet becomes like the Dead Sea, stagnant. If we have lost the joy of communion with God we can find our way back by sharing our need with those who are in communion with God.

(d) We are told to work it out "in fear and trembling," that is without self-confidence or self-satisfaction with present attainments. In a very real sense we are co-workers with God, and actually we can only work out what God works in us.

3. "*God which worketh in you*," or: "It is God Who putteth forth His power." The same word is used in Gal. ii. 8: "He wrought mightily in me." He works in us with all the needed power to give effect to His will for us. His one condition is that we obey His leading. Do we doubt our ability to continue in our Christian life? Do we fear lest the joyful experience of God will not last? Do we worry lest our own

unreliable human nature will fail us at the testing time? Let us remember :—

(a) "God worketh in you." This does not mean He has worked or He will work, but He works *now*. At any moment of our lives we can take our stand in that as a present fact.

(b) God is working in you with sufficient power for every need.

(c) God is working in you effectively, carrying through His purpose.

(d) God is working in you in a twofold way, to will and to do. See Heb. xiii. 21: "God . . . make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight." St. Paul says that God works in us both to will and to work on behalf of His good pleasure (see 2 Thess. i. 11).

4. The apostle now begins to apply this to the church in Philippi: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings" (ii. 14). (a) "Murmuring" is a word used of the children of Israel for their discontent. It is meant for those who feel that their Christian lives would be better if their lot were easier, if their work were different, or if their environment were changed. It is a complaint that God does not make life easier. No one knew this temptation better than Paul. He had explained his own environment of prison, soldiers, and enemies, yet he has borne witness to the triumph of grace in these very circumstances. He has a right to say: "Do all things without murmurings."

(b) Disputings are questionings and doubts about our obedience to the will of God, disputing in our hearts whether to put right what conscience tells us is wrong. Thus murmurings break our fellowship with God and disputings break our fellowship with one another.

(c) This leads to the positive result, "blameless and harmless." Blamelessness is freedom from the censure of others, harmlessness is freedom from causing injury to others. The children of God are thus stamped by their nature and character as shining lights, holding forth the Word of life.

STUDY XVII

THE COST OF FELLOWSHIP TO THE APOSTLE (Phil. ii. 17-30)

ALL through this epistle there runs the thought not only of a great spiritual experience, but also of the real cost of discipleship to any one who will wholly follow Christ. The apostle loves the rapid contrast of some wonderful conception of Christ and the ordinary affairs of life as they met him. Thus he carried them in chapter i. 5, first to the "fellowship in the Gospel," and then (i. 13) to his "bonds in Christ." He contrasts (i. 7) those who "in defence of the gospel" are "partakers of my grace" with those who "preach Christ of contention, supposing to add affliction to my bonds" (i. 16). So also in chapter ii. After the two glorious pictures of Christ in His humiliation and ascension he suddenly turns to a seemingly ordinary theme on a much lower plane. The fact is he lifted all the details of human life up to the highest level of spiritual significance. The sending of Timothy and Epaphroditus was an action requiring divine guidance as truly as any of the bigger things in the furtherance of the Gospel.

1. "*If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith*" (ii. 17).—This verse is of deep significance. Here is a man facing death, opposed by men who have gone specially to Rome to add to his troubles, a man with a small band of reliable friends, all too small for the great task in Rome; yet he promises at this time to send Timothy to them. It marks an entire consecration to God's service. He is ready to be sacrificed if thus the Kingdom of God can be furthered. It also marks a limitless obedience because he is ready to go even unto death. Tragedy seems near, the clouds hang down low over the apostle's head, yet he again triumphs over environment, and the note of fellowship-joy comes out again: "I rejoice and have [fellowship] joy with you all,"

and note how Paul applies it. The church is anxious for the safety of their beloved leader. This joy comes like sunshine through the clouds and he adds: "Do ye also rejoice and have this fellowship-joy with me."

Joy here is nothing selfish, nor is it even individual. It is the joy our Lord offered His disciples corporately: "My joy I give unto you," the joy that comes through the fellowship life. Such joy is costly. The apostle is entering into the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." Paul seeks to share the joy of sacrifice with the Philippian church. The point to watch is the connexion between this surrendered life of fellowship the apostle lived and his readiness to send Timothy to Philippi.

2. *Timothy*.—"I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy" (ii. 19-24). (See also i. 14, and ii. 24.) The apostle never acts except as "in Christ." His every movement is made under divine guidance because Christ is now the centre of his being. Thus he says that he lives in the Lord, he hopes in the Lord, he boasts in the Lord, and he labours in the Lord. It is interesting to note that Timothy was one of the original team that first evangelized Philippi (Acts xvi. 5). Paul's testimony to him is: "He served with me in the gospel," again giving the thought of fellowship service. This service was costly. In ii. 22 Paul says Timothy served as "a bond slave." Consecration for him meant taking this life service for world evangelization.

3. *Epaphroditus* (ii. 25-30).—The apostle promises to send Timothy as soon as he shall know what the result of his imprisonment is to be. In the meantime Epaphroditus is returning to them. He was a member of the Philippian church, sent to Rome with gifts for Paul. While there he was taken ill, and in answer to prayer had been restored to health again. Notice Paul's three terms in describing him. He is "my brother," my "fellow-worker," and my "fellow-soldier." Thus we are given three great ideas of the sympathy of a brother, the service of a worker, and the sacrifice of a soldier. Again the thought of fellowship comes out in all three. It is expressed by Paul's use of compound words like "fellow-worker." Lightfoot says: "The three words are

arranged in an ascending scale, common sympathy, common work, common danger, toil and suffering." Fellow-worker means a member of the team. Notice how St. Paul uses this word: Rom. xvi. 3, 9, 21; 1 Cor. iii. 9; Phil. iv. 3; Col. iv. 11; 1 Thess. iii. 2. Fellow-soldier implies that Epaphroditus, though a visitor, had shared the apostle's danger, taking part in the witness to the Gospel in Rome. He then describes Epaphroditus as the messenger of the Philippian church and a "minister to my need" (ii. 25), and he uses a word that in the Old Testament was used for the service of priests and Levites. In Christ no service is secular, and Epaphroditus, who comes with the offertories of Philippi, serves in the highest sense in holy things in administering this fund.

4. The messenger is returning (ii. 28) and Paul says: "Receive him in the Lord." What does he mean? The fellowship which they had had in Rome he is to carry into Philippi, the lesson of the apostle's life and witness is to be a challenge to the Philippians. They will find Epaphroditus changed, and his return to Philippi may prove most uncomfortable for some church members. What of their fellowship? Will it stand the test of sacrifice, service, witness? Will Epaphroditus arouse jealousy among them? Will they build barriers against the challenge of his new message, or will they be big enough to see that God is speaking through him? There seems to be something of this implied in ii. 29: "Receive him with all gladness."

In closing this Study think through the challenge to the Philippian church. (a) Paul's personal danger and disregard of personal interests (i. 17). (b) Paul's few really consecrated fellow-workers; yet again his disregard of his own comforts (ii. 21). (c) Timothy, who "as a son to a father served as a slave with me" (ii. 22). (d) Epaphroditus a brother, fellow-worker, and fellow-soldier (ii. 25).

SECTION III

FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS (Phil. iii)

Study XVIII. Fellowship-Joy, *v.* 1.

Study XIX. Fellowship centred in Christ, *vv.* 2-8 : (a) The Cost : "The loss of all things."

Study XX. Fellowship centred in Christ, *vv.* 9-14 : (b) The Gain : Life Abundant in Christ.

Study XXI. Fellowship illustrated by the Citizen Life, *vv.* 15-21.

STUDY XVIII

FELLOWSHIP-JOY (Phil. iii. 1)

“**R**EJOICE in the Lord” (iii. 1). Chapter iii begins the third section in the development of St. Paul’s great theme of Christian fellowship, and the key verse of the chapter is v. 10: “The fellowship of his sufferings.” The apostle begins this deep theme with “Rejoice in the Lord,” because joy is a characteristic of true fellowship. The word “joy” or “rejoice” is found sixteen times in this epistle, and in this study we must retrace our steps to see this as one of the characteristic notes of Philippians.

I. Chapter i. The fellowship of the Gospel brings out a threefold joy: (a) i. 4: Joy in prayer: “Making request with joy.” Prayer has a joyful side because of the certainty of an answer (i. 6: “Being confident of this very thing,” that is, the thing he was praying about); because of the fellowship it brings both with God and with His children; and because through prayer Paul, the prisoner, can still work in the churches he founded (i. 9). (b) i. 18: Joy in witness: “Christ is preached, I do rejoice.” Witness was joyful because it was unconquerable. Prison bars, scheming Jews, hostile Romans, could not prevent its spreading (i. 12). It was joyful because it was fearless (i. 14). It was joyful because it was the witness of love (i. 17). (c) i. 25: Joy in faith: “I shall continue for your joy of faith.” This joy in faith is the joy the apostle found in transmitting to others what he was learning in Christ. It is the joy of sharing with others a conscious experience of

personal faith in Christ. The context shows that the joy lay not so much in the apostle's faith as in his power of transmitting it to others.

2. Chapter ii. The fellowship of the Spirit brings out again a threefold message on joy. (a) The condition of joy (ii. 2): "Fulfil ye my joy . . . be like-minded, having the same love." In our study of the chapter we saw how unity of mind and heart were the conditions of fellowship. Approached from the angle of joy we see it as the evidence of true fellowship. Joy that springs from a common love is spontaneous, real, and abiding, but it is not ordinary human joy. It is rather the joy that comes through the revealed presence of God in human experience.

(b) The joy of sacrifice (ii. 17): "If I be offered up . . . I rejoice with you all." Notice how this joy springs from Paul's identification with Christ. He "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, . . . he humbled himself, obedient unto death" (ii. 7, 8). So the apostle suffered the loss of all things, he served as a bond slave of Jesus Christ, and he was willing to be offered up for the progress of the Gospel. Every single stage seemed to make joy more impossible, yet at every fresh sacrifice there came a new flood of divine joy. Rightly did the prophet of old say: "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

(c) Sacrificial joy is fellowship-joy. Notice ii. 18: "For the same cause . . . rejoice with me." He wanted the whole church to share his actual joy in his Roman prison. Paul had found joy in service in preaching the Gospel. In prison he discovered that the joy remained in spite of bonds (i. 12-14) and rivals (i. 15-18), and, what is often much more difficult, in spite of suspense (i. 19, 20). His joy was therefore not merely the joy of an active life. It was centred in a conscious experience of Christ as a real Companion and Friend in all circumstances. It found expression in self-denial (ii. 1-2), in a lowly and humble spirit (ii. 3), in a study of the other man's point of view (ii. 4), and in a likemindedness to Christ his great Companion (ii. 5). Because of this his main concern in life was no longer himself but the Church of Christ he was founding, hence his anxiety for his converts and his willingness

to sacrifice himself for them (ii. 12-18). This comes out forcibly in chapter ii in the tender sympathy, affection, and love for his friends in Philippi (ii. 19-30).

3. Chapter iii, dealing with "the fellowship of his sufferings," therefore fittingly begins as we have seen with joy. The apostle in linking joy and sacrifice together is but following out what was a characteristic in our Lord's own life. Note the following: (a) St. Luke x. 21: Christ's joy in the triumph of His Gospel (compare St. Luke xv. 5); (b) St. John xv. 11: "My joy . . . in you"; (c) Heb. xii. 2: "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." As we shall see in subsequent studies this joy runs through everything in Paul's life. He counts all things loss that he may win Christ, and in doing so he finds a joy that eclipses any happiness he ever knew in his Jewish days (iii. 1-11). He presses on towards the prize. It may come through a terrible death, but so convinced is he that Christ must win in the end that his anxiety is turned into joy, and the strain of suspense, waiting as he is for the verdict of a Roman judge as to whether he is to live or die, is turned into a calm restfulness and peace. Our Lord said (St. Luke xxi. 28): "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." Paul could look the world in the face when he was most in danger because he had found Christ and He had never failed.

4. Chapter iv, which carries us into the fellowship of service, begins like other chapters with the note of joy. The apostle speaks of his converts as "my joy and crown" (iv. 1). They are his fellow-labourers, he therefore tells them to rejoice and adds: "Again I say rejoice" (iv. 4). He never could have said this to a young church, exposed to persecution and danger, unless he had been absolutely certain of God. The apostle says "rejoice in the Lord" (iv. 4), and this familiar phrase is significant. It implies that joy comes when our lives are in line with the will of God. It involves our giving God the control of our lives. Self destroys joy and Christ develops joy in the human soul, He must therefore be able to guide and direct our lives. Life lived on this plane is sheer joy because He becomes responsible for us, He enters

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into the most minute and insignificant affairs of life. He gives direct guidance to us and He demands implicit obedience. The implications of this go deep. St. Paul having surrendered his life to Christ finds his thoughts, his words, his actions, all have an origin in Christ. Because he is "in Christ Jesus," he is able to say: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live . . . I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me."

STUDY XIX

FELLOWSHIP CENTRED IN CHRIST (Phil. iii. 2-8)

(a) The Cost : "The loss of all things"

IS it of design that the apostle gives us two such different words in the openings of this chapter? In iii. 1 he says "rejoice"; and in iii. 2 "beware." "Rejoice" marks a happy family fellowship, but "beware" means danger ahead. What has the apostle in mind? Judaism had hitherto shown a remarkable power of absorption wherever it had met non-Jewish thought, and yet in spite of the impacts of Greek and other learning Judaism maintained its distinctive characteristics, its essential identity, and its system of theology unimpaired. This in a measure had been easy where polytheism lay at the basis of the non-Jewish thought with which the Jews were surrounded. But a new element had come into the problem. Christianity had come as a new faith, with equally strong and distinctive elements, and a section of the Jews saw the danger to their faith so they suggested a compromise. They wished to come to terms. They were prepared to go a long way in the adoption of Christian ethics. They would accept Christ as prophet and teacher, but their one condition was that the law of Moses must not be violated. Add to it, they would argue, the Sermon on the Mount, but accept the Mosaic law as the eternal law of God. St. Paul would have none of it, because he saw that to assimilate Christianity to Judaism would nullify the Gospel. He opposed every effort to bend the Christian Church to the law of Moses. His problem was that of every mission area to-day. Was St. Paul seeking to christianize Judaism or make Jews into Christians? In Moslem lands the same argument is used at the present time, and, recently, prominent Hindus have urged upon the missionaries to cease from making converts and to christianize Hinduism. We reach therefore an important aspect of church-building in the mission station at Philippi.

1. Why was St. Paul so strongly opposed to any co-operation with the Jews? (a) First and foremost must be placed the reason that by doing so he would have reduced Christ to the rank of a Jewish prophet. It would have cut out the doctrine of the Incarnation. That is why in writing to the Colossians Paul brings a great line of thought up to the only climax in Christian experience: "That in all things he might have the pre-eminence" (Col. i. 18).

(b) If Paul had compromised he would have made the Cross of Christ of none effect. Salvation would have been through the law of Moses. The apostle is emphatic that Christ does not save merely by His power of example. His death was not that of a martyr. The message of the Gospel as Paul preached it made the Cross the place of redemption. (See 1 Cor. i. 17, 18, ii. 1, 2, and xv. 1-3.) It is therefore clear that Paul took the line that compromise where Christ is concerned is not only misleading, it is dangerously false, because it is untrue to the revelation of God in Christ. This the apostle had expounded in Phil. ii. 1-12.

(c) Paul opposed these Judaizers because converts who had given up all for Christ were being told that there was no need for them to leave their old faith. Persecution was unnecessary, they could be good Christians and still remain within the Jewish fold. Here obviously the whole future of Christianity was at stake. Christ will not share His claim with any other. His demands upon human life for surrender could not be made by any other. It is because He is the Lord of Glory that He seeks for our whole-hearted, undivided allegiance to Himself and to none other. Life cannot be divided between Buddha and Christ or Mohammed and Christ. It must be one or the other.

2. Paul now explains his own Jewish position and his experience in Christ. He was a Jew, a Pharisee, learned in the law, trusting in Moses, persecuting the Church. He had position, theology, prospects. His Greek environment had not weakened his Jewish zeal. His Roman citizenship had only strengthened him. Yet at the call of Christ he says these things I count but loss for Christ (iii. 7). Notice how the apostle brings out three things that are new through the coming of Christ. (a) Worship of God in the Spirit (iii. 3).

It is the contrast between the outward observance such as he knew it in the Temple worship, and an inner worship of the soul through the Holy Spirit.

(b) Joy in Christ Jesus because of Who He is and what He has done. The apostle is not dealing simply with the theology of Christ as the Son of God or with the doctrine of the atonement. He glories in Christ because of these, but also because of what they lead to, because of the differences Christ had made in his own life.

(c) "No confidence in the flesh" (iii. 4). Paul admits that he could never have saved himself by his own effort. Once he was awakened to the fact of sin in his life and he had seen himself in the light of Christ's blazing purity, he knew that the position was hopeless as far as his own strength was concerned. He could not overcome evil, but Christ met him with both pardon and deliverance, with grace and strength, with a redemption that had lifted him out of the mire and given him a new life. He says old things are passed away, all things have become new. The apostle sacrificed everything for Christ personally. He knew something of Him. He longed to know more, so he says: "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," and the last four words here are the key to everything: "Christ Jesus my Lord." It was St. Paul's personal relationship to Jesus Christ which made the difference.

STUDY XX

FELLOWSHIP CENTRED IN CHRIST (Phil. iii. 9-14)

(b) The Gain : Life abundant in Christ

IN the previous Study we have seen how to St. Paul there is no privilege of race, religion, or class worth anything in comparison with Christ.

i. In this connexion notice St. Paul's emphasis upon his own experience and the supremacy of Christ. He repeatedly says "I," and after explaining what he was prepared to do to win Christ he adds : "Christ Jesus my Lord."

iii. 7. "What things were gain to me. . . . I counted loss for Christ."

iii. 8. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ . . . that I may win Christ."

iii. 9. "That I may . . . be found in Him."

iii. 10. "That I may know Him."

iii. 12. "That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended."

iii. 12. "I follow after."

iii. 14. "I press toward the mark."

It is clear that the apostle's fellowship in the Gospel has expanded into a new and fuller relationship to Jesus Christ. Paul knows the cost of it all, but he does not begin with cost and sacrifice but with the glory and wonder of the Incarnation and with the triumph of the resurrection. It is the glory of Christ that makes all earthly things fade into insignificance. The vision is so wonderful, so all-absorbing, so compelling, that Paul is prepared to lose everything else in order to win this. Chapter iii, therefore, can only be understood in the light of chapter ii. It is development of ii. 5 : "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

2. St. Paul in iii. 8, 9 is probably referring in the first instance to his conversion, and in fact we can only understand this passion of the apostle as we see it as resulting

from what happened on the Damascus road. When Christ first met him his life was challenged. The issue was this : he might gain fame, honour, riches, position, or he might gain Christ, but it was clear that the apostle had reached the cross roads and he could not have both his Jewish position and Christ. Paul had two questions to ask : " Who art thou, Lord ? " and : " What wilt thou have me to do ? " It was the knowledge of Who Christ was that made an absolute surrender possible. Did Paul regret it ? No, for he goes on in the subsequent verses to explain how life, although from one point of view it had been a continual loss, yet actually had been sheer gain. His first vision had expanded into an ever-increasing experience of Christ until his one ambition was " that I may know Him." For over twenty years this was tested. We often ask whether some great religious experience can last. Paul's answer was to point to Christ as inexhaustible. Every test brought some new rewarding experience, some new sense of the adequacy of Christ to meet every need through His unfailing love, His ever-sufficient grace, and His enabling power. This experience is no mere eastern mysticism but a real fact based upon the presence of a real Person.

3. Surrender has cost the apostle much but it has brought gain. This can only be explained by one word, " Christ." This is why Paul speaks in Eph. iii. 8 of the " unsearchable (inexhaustible) riches of Christ." The apostle gives us in all his epistles wonderful pictures of grace, mercy, riches, and love, but he always brings us back to the fact that these are attributes of Christ and to know them we must know Him. Paul would thus lead us into what he had found, the glorious possibility of sustained, personal, and vital experience of Christ. To know Christ does not necessarily involve any great knowledge of theology. It does not demand a complete answer to many puzzling problems in life. The apostle is not dealing simply with an intellectual knowledge of some one he has read about and whom he admires, he is explaining that he had found the only Person in the world to Whom he could yield heart, life, love, devotion, all. Paul recognized, Christ as the One for Whom he had been seeking all his life the only One Who could satisfy his deep longings and meet

his needs. This same thought comes out in the Old Testament in connexion with Jehovah. See Hosea xiv. 8: "Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him."

4. St. Paul explains that there are two things he wants to know about Christ: (1) "the power of his resurrection," and (2) "the fellowship of his sufferings." "The power of his resurrection" has a twofold meaning. The power by which God raised Jesus Christ from the dead (see Eph. i. 19-21), and the power committed to Him as the risen Lord (see St. Matt. xxviii. 18). In Eph. i. 17-20 the apostle prays that God will give the Christians at Ephesus "the spirit of wisdom . . . in the knowledge of him," and then he goes on to pray that they may know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward . . . according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." The power by which He rose triumphant over death is identically the same power which raises us into "newness of life in Christ," and this is the power Christ offered Paul for his life and service. Christ said: "All power is given unto me . . . go ye."

The apostle therefore explains his experience of this. He had by yielding his life to Christ been linked on to a limitless, unfailing, and ever-present power, available at all times, in all circumstances, for all races of every age. In all his relationships both to God and to man, Paul was joined inseparably to his risen Lord, and Christ's control of his life was the one determining factor in all the issues of that life.

5. The apostle was under no delusion. The power of Christ is ever available, but there is nothing in the New Testament to show that it is to be obtained cheaply. The power of His resurrection is inseparably linked with the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul's partnership in Christ had made him sharer in the Gospel (i. 5). It had led him into the fellowship of the Spirit. It had given him resurrection power, and now he had to learn that the pathway to a life of fellowship always runs by the way of the Cross. Resurrection power is only entrusted to those who share in passion-fellowship, "the fellowship of his sufferings." In Christ's life it had meant three things: (a) Conformity to the

will of God (*see* Heb. x. 9, v. 8) : " Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience." (b) Love as the one motive : " Not that we loved God, but that he loved us." (c) Hatred of sin. The Cross reveals the horror of sin, and there can be no fellowship with His sufferings where sin is either tolerated or cherished.

Thus the Cross becomes " the great divide " between the hatreds of the world and the love of God, between the selfishness of man and the self-giving of God, between the sinfulness of man and the purity of God. Conformity to His death means ranging ourselves on Christ's side, identifying ourselves with the full purpose of Calvary so that all the Cross stood for may be what we stand for, that we may share in all the fruits of His redemption.

STUDY XXI

FELLOWSHIP ILLUSTRATED BY THE CITIZEN LIFE (Phil. iii. 15-21)

ST. PAUL is applying the teaching of life centred in Christ, as illustrated by his own personal experience, to the Philippian church : "*Let us therefore*" (iii. 15).

1. This is one of the apostle's favourite ways of applying his teaching. Notice how this comes in in i. 27 : "Let your [citizen life] be as it becometh the gospel" ; ii. 1 : "If there be any consolation in Christ" ; ii. 5 : "Let this mind be in you." So in iii. 15 : "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect." Paul is not thinking of sinless, but of mature Christians. "Perfect" is used of men of ripe knowledge and experience. (See 1 Cor. ii. 6 where the apostle says : "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect.") He is referring to those who are prepared to go the whole way for Christ, to those who have followed the apostle's witness and its implications in full surrender, even though it may mean "the loss of all things." The challenge of Paul's testimony is whether we are prepared to take all risks for Christ, not simply those we think prudent, but *all* risks, that we may "know Him."

2. Some obviously had not seen all that this testimony implied for them. They were inclined to disagree with Paul, and although sincere, yet they could not see the necessity for burning their boats. Paul is not prepared to argue about it. He says it is a spiritual question and "God will reveal it to you." His advice seems to have been : live up to the light God has given you, follow Him in obedience as the light reveals God's will for you, and more light will come as it is needed. Notice in this connexion our Lord's words in St. John vii. 17 : "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

3. "*Walk by the same rule.*"—St. Paul lays down few if

any actual rules, and here he is using an analogy which explains his meaning. In the Athenian military oath the promise given was not against desertion, but that a soldier on oath swore that he would walk in step with his comrades. This implied much more than negatively promising to remain with the army. The word is used "to walk in line," or, "to march in battle order." Paul sees that the unifying force of Christian fellowship is the one method for a victorious Church. Individualism must give place to the claims of corporate life. Christians must keep in step with one another. The first requisite for this is: "Let us mind the same things," or, have a common interest in the affairs of Christ's Kingdom.

4. *"Be followers together of me."*—The same thought is carried over into iii. 17. In iii. 16 we are told to have a common mind if we would keep in step, and in iii. 17 we are warned about the need of common action. "Followers together" is fellow-followers. Paul is an example not in himself but of what God can do for one wholly yielded to Him. The Church was in danger from Judaizers who would nullify the works of the Cross, make unnecessary any break from their old religion, and also from the dissensions within the Church, where in some cases zeal outran love and jealousy crept in (see iv. 2). Paul puts the challenge again of the cross. They can (a) either be enemies of the cross of Christ; or (b) risk all because of the cross of Christ.

5. *The offence of the Cross* (iii. 17, 18).—Paul uses strong language because he knows what is at stake. To deny the sufficiency of and the need for the Cross is to make salvation a matter of human effort, where God saves men by the example of Christ as the ideal man. Paul says: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross." Chapter iii. 18 implies that "the great divide" in life is the Cross. It separates between living for self or living for God; between living as self-righteous or claiming forgiveness "through the blood of his cross"; between our refusal to follow Christ wholly or to face persecution for the Cross. Some, he says, cut out the cross from their lives because of self-indulgence, secret sins; and others from fear of persecution. What part does the cross of Christ play in our lives? Have we cut it out through fear?

6. *The blessings and acceptance of the Cross* (iii. 20, 21).—"Our citizenship is in heaven." Paul says not that "our conversation" is in heaven but that "our metropolis" is there. In i. 27 he called us "to live our citizen life." This word citizenship is nowhere else used in the New Testament. Lightfoot says it may mean (a) the state to which as citizens we belong, or (b) the functions which as citizens we perform. Our translators used "conversation" because of its original meaning. It implies "conduct or behaviour in our intercourse with society," in other words our fellowship life. The apostle has in mind a community life whose fatherland is above, and although living as colonists at present in another country we enjoy the privileges of our citizenship in the fatherland and are subject to its laws. The apostle applies this illustration not to take us out of the world or to give us merely a dream for the future, but rather to show our responsibilities as citizens now in order to "commend the gospel."

7. *"From whence also we look for the Saviour."*—Once more Paul brings our minds back even from the thought of heaven itself to the personal Christ, "the Saviour," Who "shall fashion anew our bodies" because "he was found in fashion as a man" (see ii. 8). The Saviour was fashioned like us in His Incarnation that we may be like Him in glory. This consummation has its present liability and promise: "According to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself."

SECTION IV

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION (Phil. iv)

Study XXII. Fellowship in Action.

Study XXIII. Prayer, *vv.* 6, 7.

Study XXIV. The Standards of Fellowship, *vv.* 8, 9.

Study XXV. Christian Stewardship, *vv.* 10-19.

STUDY XXII

FELLOWSHIP IN ACTION (Phil. iv)



WE commence in this Study the fourth section. Fellowship in the Gospel led to a deeper experience of fellowship of the Spirit, and this in turn brought the church to the centre of cost of fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. The apostle has described the rewarding experience of those who follow Christ, and he now begins some practical applications of the teaching he has given, which we will study under the general title of Fellowship in Action.

1. *The power of continuance* (iv. 1).—St. Paul can never separate his theology from his experience, and what he has found in Christ is what he has to give to the Philippian church. He begins: "My beloved," "my longed for," "my joy," "my crown." To understand the depth of feeling behind these expressions we must put ourselves in his position. The active ambassador, yet imprisoned, the apostle with the care of all the churches yet unable to visit them, the herald of the Gospel yet bound and fettered. He longs to see them because he knows their perils. He is anxious for their faith and in these expressions there is the pathos, tenderness, and affection of one who is laid aside in the midst of a busy career. We catch here a glimpse of what his work meant to Paul, of how deeply his heart was in it and of what it cost him to be forbidden an active participation in work he had himself initiated. In this trying experience he had proved that it is possible to be steadfast, that the experience of Christ does last, even when everything is against a man. He has therefore a right to expect that they too should stand fast in trials and persecutions.

2. *"Stand fast."*—This is a favourite word of St. Paul's: 1 Cor. xvi. 13: "Stand fast in the faith"; Gal. v. 1: "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free"; Phil. i. 27: "Stand fast in one spirit."

To stand fast is to hold one's ground. (See Eph. vi. 13, to stand equipped with the whole armour of God.) Paul draws his illustration from the Roman amphitheatre where captives had to fight for their lives. In the same way he says Christians are called upon to fight against sin and to display unflinching courage. To stand fast implies more than individual constancy. It is the steadfastness of the battle front, of the whole team. It is the steadfastness of the fellowship.

3. *What breaks the ranks?*—Dissension (iv. 2). These two women were probably deaconesses in the Philippian church. They had quarrelled seriously and the matter had become so serious that it was reported to Paul in Rome. He makes a personal appeal to them. Notice how "beseech" is used twice. This church had been marked by a personal affection for Paul and by a deep fellowship, yet among its most active and best workers there has sprung up this jealousy.

One thing is clear, that there can be no team fellowship unless there is individual rightness with both God and one's fellows. Paul probably had this problem in mind when in chapter ii. 1-14 he says they are to put away vain glory, murmurings, and disputings. The only solution is "the mind of Christ." The humble, understanding, self-effacing spirit brings its own reward in true fellowship.

Incidentally this verse (iv. 2) throws a flood of light upon the place of women in the early Church. There is no idea of inferiority here. Paul speaks of them as having "laboured with me in the gospel," and Acts xvii. 4, 12 shows how at its inception the church in Philippi owed much to the women.

4. *Personal service* (iv. 3).—The apostle now appeals to some unknown disciple in Philippi to help in the matter. He describes him as a "yoke-fellow" or a fellow yoke bearer. The thought might be compared with St. Matt. xi. 29: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me." There is a striking similarity between our Lord's own appeal and St. Paul's appeal of Phil. ii. 5: "Let this mind be in you." He uses here a compound word which implies fellowship in bearing Christ's yoke. They were in harness together under the yoke of Christ in order to plough the Roman world for the gospel seed. St. Paul's similes change very rapidly and here there are three illustrations (iv. 3): (a) "True yoke-fellow," under

the yoke of Christ together ; (b) " fellow-soldier," " they strive with me in the gospel " (cf. Moffatt) ; (c) " fellowlabourers," " other my fellowlabourers." It is this threefold cord of the fellowship which gives Paul his threefold exhortation : (a) Reconciliation—that they may stand together, strive together, and work together in the Gospel. (b) Joy—the fruit of reconciliation and an abiding result of fellowship service (iv. 4). (c) Forbearance—" Let your moderation be known."

It is a combination of equity and gentleness. It is the Spirit which stresses duties before rights. No word could sum up better the needs of those in Philippi, who were at variance with one another. It involves the tolerance of other people's opinions even when we differ strongly from them.

5. "*The Lord is at hand.*"—The whole subject of steadfastness, unity within the team, is brought to a head by this thought of our Lord's return (*see* 1 Cor. xvi. 22). It means either the Lord will come or the Lord is here. He is here now to give us grace and power that when He comes in glory " he may present us faultless."

STUDY XXIII

PRAYER (Phil. iv. 6, 7)

BE careful for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Running through this epistle is the sense of mutual help through prayer. In Phil. i. 4 St. Paul says he makes request with joy for their fellowship in the Gospel, and (i. 9, 10) he adds : " This I pray, that your love may abound . . . that ye may approve things that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere and without offence."

This prayer of Paul's finds expression in his teachings of the epistle. He has just been exhorting the Philippians to steadfastness, and to reconciliation where two women were quarrelling. Was he not reminding them of his prayer for them ? In i. 19 he asks for their prayers and seeks for an abundant supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. He now sums up these thoughts in a message to the church on prayer.

1. The negative side : " Be careful for nothing " ; " In nothing be over anxious." It gives the idea of continuous worry and anxiety which made them brood over their troubles. The apostle has faced this question of anxiety and he knows that while due care and thought are necessary, yet anxiety which distracts our minds from Christ is sin. It is dishonouring to Christ to say He can meet our needs and by our unbelief prevent His acting on our behalf. This little church had much about which it could worry. It was founded in a stormy and tempestuous evangelistic campaign (Acts xvi), when Paul was imprisoned. It was subject to continual persecution and opposition ; its message was misunderstood and made the subject of scorn and jest. Certain Jewish Christians had introduced schism in their midst by trying to fasten upon the church the law of Moses. Their leader Paul was far away in prison and unable to help them.

Their colleague Epaphroditus had nearly died in Rome of illness. Some members of the congregation were jealous of one another. These are a few of the worries. Can Christ meet their need in their own environment?

St. Matt. xiii. 22. The same word for "careful" is used of the "care of this world" (*see also* St. Luke xxi. 34). Our Lord says to Martha (St. Luke x. 41, R.V.): "Thou art troubled about many things," and St. Peter gives the cure to the trouble in 1 Pet. v. 7: "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." If we believe in Christ as actually thinking of us, planning for us, caring about our welfare, surely we can surrender our worries to Him and allow Him to undertake in all things.

2. *The positive side.*—"In everything by prayer and supplication." It is sometimes argued that because God is concerned with the running of the universe and the big things of the world we cannot bring our trivial things to Him. But Paul says "in everything," and he would not exclude from the category any single thing which happens to us. We can tell God all, even the most minute detail, we can go to Him for help on trivial things. Anything less than this would be a lack of faith in Him as almighty. It would be placing a limit upon the Infinite. It is because He is God that He has this infinite capacity for entering into human life in all its details, and it is because He cares that we can cast our worries big and little on to Him. "By prayer and supplication." Note the contrast here given: "In nothing, over anxious"; "In everything, pray."

3. The apostle here challenges the church to pray in fellowship in response to our Lord's promise: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 19). The spirit of prayer was the hope of the church. The Philippians were called upon not only to discover Christ as able to meet their own needs but to bring Him in His love and power into Philippi. This witness, or world evangelization as we should call it, was dependent upon unity and fellowship, and this fellowship could only be maintained as they increasingly learned the power of prayer.

4. Paul uses a number of words for prayer. Three are


mentioned in this verse and translated "prayer," "supplication," "thanksgiving." "Prayer" means prayer in general, and "supplication" is used for definite petitions. When Paul was praying for the church in Ephesus (Eph. i. 16, and vi. 18) he used the general word for prayer. It includes worship, adoration, and our whole attitude of soul to God. When he prays for the Philippian church he uses the word for definite petition (Phil. i. 4, 19). In 1 Tim. ii. 1 he uses yet another word, implying that prayer means to enter into familiar speech with God giving the thought of communion. In Phil. iv. 6 he also used "thanksgiving," or the prayer which gratefully acknowledges past mercies, and in the same verse says: "Let your requests," using another word for the detailed needs, large or small, we are to make known unto God.

A study of these words will reveal prayer in many aspects. For "prayer" see St. Matt. xvii. 21, xxi. 13, St. Mark ix. 29, Acts i. 14, Rom. i. 9, Col. iv. 2, Rev. v. 8. For "supplication" see Phil. i. 4, Rom. x. 1, Heb. v. 7. For "thanksgiving" see 2 Cor. iv. 15, ix. 11, Col. ii. 7, iv. 2, Rev. vii. 12. For "requests" see 1 John v. 15.

5. Thanksgiving is not only an injunction. It is part of Paul's own habit (see i. 4: "Making request with joy"). Thanksgiving is the road to faith. It kills worry and drives anxiety away because it sees what God has done. When Paul prayed about failures in young churches his thanksgiving destroyed criticism of the people prayed for. In every epistle he finds something in these churches for which to thank God. Thus he thanks God for Roman faith, Corinthian grace, Philippian fellowship, and Colossian love. Such prayer brings peace. "And the peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds." Compare this with Col. iii. 14, 15: "Put on charity . . . the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule [or garrison] your hearts." See also Phil. iv. 9: "The God of peace." Paul does not use Phil. iv. 7 as a prayer but as a promise. If we pray the promise is peace.

STUDY XXIV

THE STANDARDS OF FELLOWSHIP (Phil. iv. 8, 9)

 **WHATSOEVER** things are true . . . honest . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . good report." The Philippians have been brought into fellowship with God and it is through this that they have found fellowship with one another. Therefore God alone is the standard for the fellowship. All through the apostle holds them up to the highest. What he covets for them is God's best and no second best.

Dr. Lightfoot says: "Speaking roughly, the words may be said to be arranged in a descending scale. The first four describe the character of the actions themselves, the two former 'true, honest,' being absolute, the two latter 'just, pure,' relative; the fifth and sixth 'lovely, good report,' point to the moral approbation which they conciliate; while the seventh and eighth 'virtue and praise,' in which the form of expression is changed, are thrown in as an after-thought, that no motive may be omitted."

There are four standards of Christian character which the apostle groups together under these titles. (1) Truth; (2) honesty; (3) purity; (4) beauty. If we compare this verse with Study IX on Phil. i. 7-11, where St. Paul is praying for this church, we shall see how he sought that their love might abound, that they might approve the things which are excellent, and be sincere and without offence. He therefore set them the standard of love, honesty, purity, and sincerity. The epistle showed how these standards were possible of attainment in Christ (chap. ii) and how Paul had proved the reality of the experience Christ gives (chap. iii). He now summarizes what he previously prayed for and brings out the four standards by which we should judge our lives. If we have failed it is no call to despair but

to a new discovery of the power of Christ. Paul would not lower the standards because of failures, rather would he expose failure by keeping these young churches up to the highest and the best.

1. *Truth*.—God is truth. He is truth-speaking and truth-loving. (See St. John i. 17: "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.") The word is used of God to indicate His absolute faithfulness to His promise. God is therefore to the Christian the standard of truth. He seeks that we shall be true in thought, word, and deed. This covers the whole range of our characters. Shall we think of God as truth and compare this with our own failures? For example our sins: (1) of gossip. "Gossip is confessing other people's sins"; (2) of grumbling; (3) criticism which puts us in a position of judge; (4) carelessness in language, the idle word; (5) self pity, which adds to other people's burdens; (6) harshness of judgment; (7) lack of forgiveness.

Christ said: "I am the truth," and judged by His standard we are to love truth for truth's sake, not for any advantage we may gain for ourselves. Truth involves transparency. Christ is light as well as truth, and we face up to this standard as we expose our lives to His light. We thus stand revealed in our failures, and He abideth faithful to do in us what we cannot do for ourselves.

2. *Honesty*.—The apostle uses a word which might be translated honourable. It means something worthy of reverence, and hence it came to denote the dignity of character which should mark the Christian. Trench in his *Synonyms of the New Testament* traces this word through Greek literature, and concludes that it stands for a grace and dignity which a man owes to his citizenship which is above. Moffatt translates it "worthy." Paul links this dignity of character with justice. Shall we think of some of the things which spoil this high ideal for us? (1) Exaggeration; (2) posing, in spiritual things it is giving other people's experience as if it were our own; (3) unjust judgment or criticism of others; (4) wearing a mask or refusing to be our real selves, so that others may think us better than we are; (5) superficiality; (6) lies; (7) evasions, where we do not show our real motives; (8) hypocrisy; (9) lack of honesty with ourselves and other

people; (10) being unwilling to say *to* others what we say *about* them.

3. *Purity*.—The apostle is not thinking here simply of freedom from sins of the flesh. He speaks of a purity in all departments of our lives, in motives as well as acts. It differs from holy in that holy means something set apart or dedicated, while "pure" means undefiled. It is used in 1 John iii. 3 of our Lord. In 1 Tim. v. 22 it refers to moral spotlessness. The word suggests a shrinking from or a hatred of pollution of every kind. Shall we examine ourselves by this standard? It involves discipline in thought, in life, in action. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the will of Christ. In the struggle between imagination and will, the imagination wins every time; but Paul points the way to a purified and cleansed imagination where Christ takes possession of our thought life.

4. *Beauty*.—"Whatsoever things are lovely." Good report is bound up with the lovely because it stands for man's approbation of what is lovely in character, "lovely" means the characteristics which call forth love. Beauty of character implies a graciousness and courtesy which grace alone produces. It is the unselfishness which gives itself in service for others. Shall we test our lives by this standard? We may be honest and pure yet lack the beauty of the Lord. What is it?

(i) Our strain, fear, and worry imply a lack of trust which robs us of "the peace of God."

(ii) Self-love, jealousy, compromise, retaliation spoil our attitude to our friends and rob us of true friendships.

(iii) Self-display, conceit, vanity, and pride rob us of the "mind of Christ."

(iv) Self-importance, self-esteem, self-indulgence, self-centredness, self-will, all blur the image of Christ in us.

Do we go off on our own when we ought to play second fiddle to some one else? Are we difficult to work with? Are we too rigid in our own opinions?

5. "*If there be any virtue . . . any praise, think on these things.*"—If after facing up to the standards of Christ we see the moral excellence in Him and the challenge to us to become like Him, then "think on these things." To think is variously

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translated "to take account," "to consider," "to lay to account." All this is linked to the apostle's own experience. The Philippian church had "learned and received" them of him. They had seen them in Paul's own life, and the Study comes to an end with the command: these things "do," and with a promise: "the God of peace shall be with you." Notice iv. 7: "The peace of God . . . shall keep your hearts and minds" as we allow the God of peace to control our lives.

STUDY XXV

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP (Phil. iv. 10-19)

FELLOWSHIP, as we have seen, demands continuous service for God, steadfastness in the face of difficulties (iv. 1-5). This comes through sustained communion with God through worship, prayer, and thanksgiving (iv. 6-7). It finds expression in a character which is based upon honesty, purity, love, and beauty (iv. 8-9). The apostle now turns in this closing section to a very personal application of fellowship, stewardship. The Philippians had collected money to help the apostle and had sent it to Rome, and for a man living on the basis of faith in God, utterly dependent upon Him for supplies, it comes as a great joy that the Philippians' fellowship had led them to do this.

1. The first thing we notice about Christian giving is that it is personal. It springs out of a real affection and care for Paul. The apostle used in v. 10 the word "flourished." It is the analogy of a tree continually sending out new shoots and producing the fragrance of fresh blossom. Stewardship rightly exercised is a thing of fragrance and beauty, an expression of love and affection, a practical proof of the fellowship we profess.

"Every Christian must be his own almoner. Gifts must be according to knowledge, and knowledge spells effort and sometimes pain, for it is not often lightly acquired. The cost of knowing is a measure of the value of the knowledge gained. So no one can discharge his task of giving by mere careless disposal of a surplus coin. He must learn for himself where his money is needed and seek there to dispose of it. Christ tested before He gave, and then dispensed in orderly ways."—*Christian Stewardship* (p. 11).

The Philippian church at its inception was the only Christian community to see the personal needs of the apostle (iv. 15). The situation was delicate, and Paul wanted to preach without having to take money from any (see 2 Cor. xi.

8, 9). There are three characteristics of this church in its giving: (a) cheerfulness; (b) sacrifice. In iv. 18 Paul speaks of their gifts "a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God." They were a small and poor community, yet they followed the apostle in prayer wherever he went, and out of this prayer life they saw the need of sacrificial giving. (c) Overflowing generosity (iv. 15). They sent messengers to overtake the apostle, and Epaphroditus travelled even as far as Rome in order to help Paul.

What did this giving bring to the church at Philippi? They learned fresh lessons about self-surrender as involving first their offering themselves to God and then their gifts. They learned that the will of God was the only thing that mattered, and if they went to God for guidance they could get it in even minute and small things. They discovered that giving changes character. The sacrifice in costly giving brings its own reward.

This practical lesson on stewardship comes at the end of an epistle which abounds with references to God as the greatest of all givers in the gift of His Son (Phil. ii. 5-8). The principle of sacrificial giving has its roots in the Incarnation when "God gave his Son," and in the Cross when Christ gave His life "a ransom for many." Giving in this church was but a reflection of what they saw as a characteristic of the Godhead. Because God gave and is continually giving Himself to us, our Christian life can only be lived satisfactorily as a life of giving, only thus can it conform to the divine plan.

God did not tithe heaven's resources to save mankind, He gave His only-begotten Son. Christ never commanded that we give one-tenth to God, but rather that we yield ourselves and our all utterly to Him, and take the position of stewards in regard to our means, our time, our talents.

2. St. Paul's teaching on stewardship deals not only with the giver but the recipient. Notice how he accepts their gifts as from God (iv. 11), and bears testimony that he has found God so true to His promises, so able to meet his needs that he is content with whatever comes, knowing God will provide. This experience has a wider application than giving. He proves for daily life that God can be relied on in all things, therefore "I can do all things" (iv. 13).

Here is an experience of faith in God which the apostle shares with us. It is faith triumphing over anxiety, worry, strain, want, and poverty. This thought of faith triumphing over material need is given too as an illustration of the apostle's teaching on prayer (*see* iv. 6, 7). At the end of his tether he prayed and God supplied his needs, and God's supply met all needs of all descriptions.

3. Paul speaking out of experience gives the promise to the donors: "My God shall supply all your need." He says in effect: "Your gift supplies my need, and my experience is that my God shall supply your need." Conybeare and Howson add: "In the fulness of His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

Riches is one of Paul's favourite words. He uses it in the following connexions: Rom. ii. 4: "The riches of God's goodness"; Rom. x. 12: "The same Lord over all is rich unto all"; Rom. xi. 33: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." In writing to Corinth he says: "Ye are enriched" (1 Cor. i. 5), and 2 Cor. viii. 9 brings out the cost to God of His enriching us. Hence all these things are summed up in Eph. i. 7 as "the riches of His grace." For this reason Paul prays in Eph. i. 17, 18: "That God may give you wisdom . . . that ye may know . . . what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." This bounteous God abides in us in all the fulness of His riches which are our inheritance. No wonder then Paul speaks of "the inexhaustible riches of Christ" (Eph. iii. 8).

4. The wonder of it all bursts anew on the apostle, and he closes with a song of glory to God (iv. 20), and ends this wonderful testimony of a costly yet ever-rewarding experience of God with the words: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

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