

Notes on Philippians III.

Walking by Faith

Author unknown

online: 20.11.2023, updated: 24.11.2023

© SoundWords 2000–2023. All rights reserved.

All articles are for private use only. They can also be distributed privately without demand. Commercial reproductions of any kind are prohibited. Publications on other internet pages are only possible after consultation.

Phil 3

As Christians we are called to walk through the world by faith, in the things unseen and outside of it. Walking by faith really tests the state of the heart; for “The things that are seen are temporal;” but “The things that are not seen are eternal.”

In Phil 2 we find Christ coming down here, and as Man His path is the opposite of Adam’s, who sought to exalt himself. Jesus humbled Himself, and became “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” He was made in the likeness of men – took upon Him the form of a servant – and, as Man, was the pattern of graciousness and obedience. The Son of God alone could do this. It is the business of the creature to keep his first estate. Though Son of God, His elevation never destroyed the sensibility of His heart to all around; He felt everything a great deal the more; but He felt it for others.

You never find Christ governed by the circumstances through which He was obliged to pass, but always moved by them. At Nain He meets the widow who had lost her only son – He is touched with compassion – touched by the circumstances, and He acted divinely in them.

As we advance in the divine life we never find it is stoical insensibility – indifference to the sorrow and trial of circumstances through which we pass ourselves, or those through which others are passing. There are links which bind the church of God together in divine communion. You see these features come out in Paul and Epaphroditus in chap. ii. These bonds in the church of God will be the expression of divine grace in the midst of circumstances which affect other people. We have to cultivate this more than we do. The power of Satan may have been in that sickness of Epaphroditus; but God was above it in mercy. We see these links of heart of the apostle entering into his epistles, except in Galatians when their hearts were getting away from the foundation. There we find even no salutations.

In Phil 3 we get the energy of that life which carries people clean out of the world. To walk well, we must have the characteristics of both chapters 2 and 3. If you see a person with one of these characteristics, without the other, it runs into carnality.

- The one is divine life coming down into the circumstances (chap. 2);
- the other, divine glory carrying you clean out of the circumstances (chap. 3)

The more we go on; the more we have to say to the Christianity of the world, or what the world calls such, the more we find that the testimony of Paul and of John is dropped in the professing Church. If a Christian is a person who has died with Christ, and is risen with Christ, he has nothing to do with this world at all, but to walk by faith through it and out of it. Hence we speak of heavenly things – “our conversation is in heaven.” Our position in Christ now, is all but dropped in its true testimony. Hear the apostle in another scripture, “Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?” (Col 2:20.) “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in yon.” (Rom 8:9.) “Ye are dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world.” (Col 2:20.) It is very easy to say I am a religious man, but that is quite different to saying I am dead with Christ, and I am alive through Him, because that sets aside

all thought of being a religious man. I must now walk as a son of God.

After Paul's decease the church ceased to be heavenly, because it ceased to count itself as dead with Christ, and as risen with Him. Consequently the state of the Christian was not "Worshipping God in the Spirit." To see people building up the flesh again, and giving it a place was what broke his heart.

Paul shows how if anyone could boast in the flesh he could. A fleshly religion did not require man to be spiritual at all. He might be devoted in a certain sense in truth, and yet be the enemy of Christ. Paul was so himself! After all this Paul could say of himself, in a restricted sense, for it was true, that he was the chief of sinners! He found fully the fact that the mind of the flesh was enmity against God. The Cross came and told of flesh, that there was no good thing in it. Then he says, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." Had he a right to say so – He who came to reveal the Father?

Do you think you can reveal God better than He could? Can you go into the world and say, 'It is to declare Him'? Do you believe that at the Cross God tried His last means with man, and found the world wholly against God? Do you think Christ could link you now with anything in this world? You know He could not.—How far has your heart taken up the Cross, and said, "I believe that the Son of God is rejected from this world; and, what is more, that it was my flesh did it!" Then you have "no confidence" in it. In the Cross is seen the excessive expression of enmity of the flesh against God; yet where the hatred and wickedness of man rose up and met God in goodness and grace, it was the occasion by which God gave expression to all the grace and love that was in His heart! You say "I am a poor sinner and Christ died for my sins." – True. That is where you learned love – the forgiveness of sins you were guilty of in the flesh." True. But He has taken you out of the flesh, and brought you into the place of God's child "in Christ," so that it can be said of you now, "As is the heavenly so are they also that are heavenly" – not now a child-of-Adam place, but that of a child of God. Then, again, you can say to the world, If you want to know where my life is, it is "Hid with Christ in God." It shows how completely I am associated with the Lord Jesus Christ; and when He shall appear, I shall appear with Him in glory, for He is my life. It is put in a very striking way, and so I am to set my "affections on things above." I am in the body still, and have to go through the world, but if I look at my life, it is hid with Christ. Then you ought to seek to glorify Christ – in short, you ought to do nothing else.

An object before a man gives him energy. What madness, then, to let anything dim our sight. You can then say, "That I may know him." Is it your earnest desire to get acquainted with Him? Are you running on to that? Is Christ so your object that you are desiring to know Him? You are going to be with Him for ever – would you not like then, to know the perfect display of all that God is in a Man? – to know what governed His heart when in the world? No human mind can get at it, but the humble heart feeds on Him, and grows like Him!

Are you getting more acquainted, then, with what will make you happy for ever in heaven? or are you feeding on what shuts Christ out? What is hidden in your heart? is the whole question. You say, "Oh! it is Christ who is at the bottom of my heart." It must be so, or you are not a Christian at all; but what is there between that and your outward walk? The news of the day –

your business – things around? Not a bit of Christ comes out in them. Your heart is the highway of the things you meet with through the day.

The kind of joy that He had, necessarily involved sorrow in the world – it was the activity of love passing through everything here that caused it the deepest sorrow. Have we the same kind of feeling? Do we know in any sense in that way, what it is to have fellowship with Christ's sufferings; yet along with it all a positive joy from God? We know very little of outward suffering. "If we suffer with him we shall reign with him." It is not suffering or, but with. Love shows itself by being absolutely governed by a single object – it leads that way. Yes, but you say it will cost me my life. Very well, I say, I must go that way, my business is to win Christ. I have seen Him in glory – I must have Him. Just as Christ, "For the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." My heart is so identifying itself with Christ – so conscious of divine favour as a present thing resting upon me – that when the wicked are in their graves I am gone to be with Christ, and to be like Him for ever! Having "Borne the image of the earthy;" I have gone to "bear the image of the heavenly."

In Romans we are looked at as "dead to sin." – not "risen," but "alive to God." In Colossians a step farther, we are "dead with Christ," and "risen with Him." In Ephesians a step farther still, "Quickened together with Christ" – "raised up together." Seated together in Christ in the heavenlies. We have got into a new state; and we have to say, that is my place as a child of God; and I never can rest till I get there. I am not thinking of being like innocent Adam, but like the glorified Christ – I shall be when I see Him. A man sees a lamp at the end of a long straight path, and every step he takes towards it, the better he sees it; and so the nearer we come to Christ the more we see Him in all His brightness; but we are not actually at the end of the path. When we are we shall be conformed to the image of the Son, that He may be the first born, among many brethren.

Redemption is a settled thing. I am redeemed out of the whole Adam condition; I have passed the Red Sea; and not only was the blood upon the door post, but I am brought out of Egypt with Him. Are you with Him? I have a great deal to learn to humble one, but I am with God! God says of Israel, "It is a stiff-necked people;" and that is the very reason Moses gave God as why He should go with them. So you may make it your plea and say, "Oh God, go with me; I never can be better; Thou must go with me!" The Holy Ghost has come down and united you with a risen and glorified Christ. This is actual practical power. Then you are down here, and your hearts will be tried and sifted; but it is because you are with God. You have got the key to it all now. You want to know distinctly and clearly that flesh can never be with God; it crucified Christ, and it won't have God – and God won't have it! Reckon yourself dead then; treat yourself as dead. You have a right to do it – it is the foundation of all your liberty and joy. If a converted man walks in the flesh, or seeks to have religiously to do with God in his flesh, he has a perpetual burden where God lays none.

We find in John iv., "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Jesus says this to the outcasts; for He had left Judea where flesh had been in connection with God in a religious sense. Now true worship was to be in the Spirit: and if you are not there, you may confess your sins, but you are not worshipping God. Could you follow Christ in the praises He, as Man, is capable of singing now? He says, "In the midst of the

congregation will I sing praise unto thee”: the praises of redemption accomplished--of righteousness made good- of God made known. In this He had the first place, as in everything. You say you cannot – but you are going to take a place at a little distance from Christ. Yes, but remember, you have no place at all unless Christ gives you one. If you think you have, you are keeping up some of the rags of your own righteousness. You have no place, or you have Christ’s place, and God has given us that. Have you learnt His place? He puts the best robe on the prodigal, and makes the whole house sing. God does not say, “My prodigal is come back,” but, “My son.” It is the Father’s glory to have him back. The question is, Is my heart at home in my Father’s house? Is it at rest there? “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you,” – the heart knows it, and it has to go through the world and get sifted and tested day by day; but it is at home with God. It looks for a city – the rest of God. It is waiting for Christ till He shall come to take us to Himself. Blessed to have hold of the fact that I have died with Christ, “Nevertheless I live;” and that “by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” I am with God, and I know Him, and so I can ask Him to go with me: just because I am such a poor thing. Does your heart trust God who spared not His own Son? then you say, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Keep your eye fixed on Him, and thus you will be able through grace to walk with Him – following hard after Him, you will find His right hand upholding you. He gives us, in His grace, to have our hearts identified with His interests; and He is not ashamed to call His brethren.

Let us, then, be “Like unto men that wait for their Lord,” that when He comes we may open to Him immediately. “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching.” He will “Make them sit down to meat,” and will “gird himself,” and “ come forth and serve them!”