

PHILIPPIANS: THE SECRET OF CHRISTIAN JOY (study 2)

Harmony & Humility

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ... PHIL. 2:5

Study 2a: SHARING in the SAME CONFLICT (1:27-2:4)

1:27-30 What, in Paul's mind, constitutes a worthy walk for Christians? (Matt.16:21-26; Acts 5:40,41)

[1:27-30] A dull uniformity is much to be feared ... amid all these differences there may be a true unity, the different notes may make one splendid burst of music, the different regiments may be animated by a common heroism, the crowd of Medes, Parthians, Elamites, Mesopotamians, Cretans and Arabians, Jews and Gentiles, may make one Church, of whom it may be said 'They continued with one accord in the temple, and in breaking bread at home.' Whatever we do as members of Christian organizations, we should lay stress upon the things in which we are agreed, and refuse to be alienated over inconsiderable matters, about which we differ. [Meyer 67,68]

**"A dull uniformity
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feared ..."**

[1:28] We ought to carry our very climate about with us, as we move in the stifling or chilling atmospheres of the world. People should breathe more freely when we draw near. Hearts and consciences should awake as though they felt the blowing of their native air. And there ought to be a freshness and buoyancy in our intercourse which shall proclaim to all men that we are enjoying the franchise and privileges of the city of God. [Jowett 38]

2:1-4 As far as Paul is concerned what is the secret of Christian harmony? (Matt.11:28-30)

[2:1] *FELLOWSHIP* is essential to the true development of character. Ever since the Creation it has not been good for man to be alone. *The Swiss Family Robinson* was always more interesting to me than *Robinson Crusoe*, because the latter was alone on the island, whilst the former was a family group. NO man can be satisfied to live by himself. It may be necessary, but he will not attain his full growth. He needs fellowship with those above him, with those beside him, and with those below him, in order to attain his full maturity. [Meyer 72]

[2:3,4] Each thinks the other better than himself. Why? Because each looks upon the best things in another and the worst things in himself; and it is only when you compare what you know yourself to be with what you think others are, that you become absolutely humble. By comparing what we sadly deplore in ourselves with what we admire in others it is not difficult to think everybody better than ourselves. [Meyer 80]

The last word of this section is the keynote -- "others." This was the overpowering, dominating note in the life of our Lord on earth, and because of this He died. "He

came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for" -- *others!* He lived for *others*; He died for *others*. Selfishness He knew not ... It is characteristic of man's deceitful natural heart to suppose that his greatest pleasure can be found in ministering to his own desires. But the truest happiness is the result of unselfish devotion to the things of *others*. [Ironside 37,40]

[2:4] The measure of our Christian growth may be estimated by the circles of our sympathetic interest. What is the circumference of our outlook? Are my sympathies represented by my umbrella, and do they merely cover myself? Or are they something like a garden tent, and do they cover a family? Or are they like a great marquee, and can all the people in the village find shelter beneath its roof? Or still grander and nobler, do they find their symbol in the overarching firmament, and do they embrace, "all nations and kindreds, and peoples and tongues"? ... They tell us that the concentric rings in the interior fibre of a tree record its age and the story of its growth. And most sure I am that the concentric rings in the soul-interests of a Christian tell the story of its growth in grace. [Jowett 59]

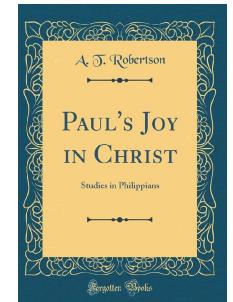
'The Name above every other name'

Through this whole passage we cannot too distinctly remember that it occurs in the Scriptures, and in the writings of one who was trained in the strictest school of Pharisaic Monotheism. St. Paul was not the man to use such terms of his Saviour and Master had he not seen in Him nothing less than the very "Fellow of JEHOVAH" (Zech. xiii. 7) ... [2:9] ... the Name Supreme, the I AM ... JEHOVAH-JESUS ... [Moule 93,95,96]

[2:9] In this case the use of the 'Name of God' in the Old Testament to denote the Divine Presence or the Divine Majesty, more especially as the object of adoration and praise, will suggest the true meaning: since the context dwells on the honour and worship henceforth offered to Him on whom 'the name' has been conferred. 'To praise *the name*, to bless *the name*, to fear *the name*, of God' are frequent expressions in the Old Testament. [Lightfoot 113]

... there is force in the argument for "Lord" as the word meant by Paul in lieu of the Tetragrammaton (the unpronounceable name of Jehovah). The Jews often used "the Name" when referring to this word. Jeremy Taylor so interpreted it: "He hath changed the ineffable name into a name utterable by man, and desirable by all the world; the majesty is arrayed in robes of mercy, the tetragrammaton of adorable mystery of the patriarchs is made fit for pronunciation and expression when it becometh the name of the Lord's Christ." The confession of Jesus as "Lord" in verse 11 gives color to this view. But even so, we must not forget that it is Jesus who still preserves his human nature who is termed Lord. [Robertson 76]

'Reflect in your own minds the mind of Christ Jesus. Be humble, as He also was humble. Though existing before the worlds in the Eternal Godhead, yet He did not cling with avidity to the prerogatives of His divine majesty, did not ambitiously display His equality with God; but divested Himself of the glories of heaven, and took upon Him the nature of a servant, assuming the likeness of men. Nor was this all. Having thus appeared among men in the fashion of a man, He humbled Himself yet more, and carried out His obedience even to dying. Nor did He die by a common death: He was crucified, as the lowest malefactor is crucified. But as



was His humility, so also was His exaltation. God raised Him to a preeminent height, and gave Him a title and a dignity far above all dignities and titles else. For to the name and majesty of Jesus all created things in heaven and earth and hell shall pay homage on bended knee; and every tongue with praise and thanksgiving shall declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, and in and for Him shall glorify God the Father.' [Lightfoot 110, para

Study 2b: HIS HUMILITY -- nay HUMILIATION (2:5-8)

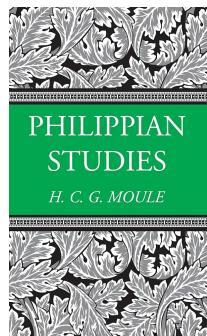
2:5-8 In which symbol does Paul find the supreme truth of Christianity? (3:18; 1 Cor.1:17,18,23; 2:2; Gal.6:14)

[2:6] The word denotes 'prior existence,' but not necessarily 'eternal existence.' The latter idea however follows in the present instance from the conception of the divinity of Christ which the context supposes. [Lightfoot 110]

[2:7] 'So far from this: He divested Himself' not of His divine nature, for this was impossible, but 'of the glories, the prerogatives, of Deity. This He did by taking upon Him the form of a servant.' The emphatic position of [eauton, himself] points to the humiliation of our Lord as *voluntary, self-imposed*. [Lightfoot 112]

Study 2c: The LORD'S GLORY SEEN in US (2:9-16)

2:9-11 What is the practical -- rather than theological -- lesson of these verses? (John 13:1-17,34,35)



St Paul is not here, as elsewhere in his Epistles, combating an error of faith; he is pleading for a life of love. He has full in view the temptations which threatened to mar the happy harmony of Christian fellowship at Philippi. His longing is that they should be "of one accord, of one mind"; and that in order to that blessed end they should each forget himself and remember others. He appeals to them by many motives; by their common share in Christ, and in the Spirit, and by the simple plea of their affection for himself. But then -- there is one plea more; it is "the mind that was in Christ Jesus," when "for us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven, and was made Man, and suffered for us." Here was at once model and motive for the Philippian saints; for Euodia, and Syntyche ... [Moule 102]

2:12-13 Is the 'fear and trembling' here in regard to the sureness of our salvation? (2 Cor.5:6-11)

Let us never utter it [the Name] without the prefix *Lord*. Let Him be always the *Lord* Jesus. If God speaks His name with marked emphasis, we must treat it with devout reverence. I greatly shrink from too great familiarity with the precious name of our Lord. [Meyer 100]

[2:12,13] For yourselves, did I say? Nay, ye are not alone. It is God working in you from first to last: God that inspires the earliest impulse, and God that directs the final achievement: for such is His good pleasure.' [Lightfoot 115]

[2:13] You may always know when God is *willing* within you -- first, by a holy

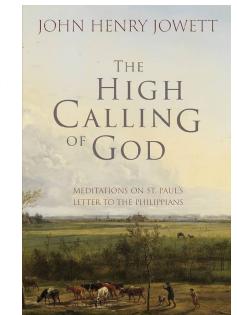
discontent with yourself. You are dissatisfied with all that you have ever done, and been ... Does God allow babes to want milk, and then in the eternal ordering of things, not provide milk? Does not the longing of the little child argue that somewhere, presumably in the mother's breast, there is the supply? Do the swallows begin to gather around the eaves of our houses longing for a sunny clime, and is there no such realm of sunshine to be reached over land and sea? Do the young lions in the winter roar for food, that God does not furnish? Do you think that God is going to give us this discontent with ourselves, this yearning after Himself, and is going to mock us? That would be the work of a devil. If you hold that God is good and loving and holy, your very aspirations are a proof that He who works in you to *will*, is prepared to work in you to *do*. [Meyer 107,109]

2:14-16 Does Paul see our success as 'the light of the world' in mastering apologetics? (Matt.5:14-16)

[2:16] What a solemn responsibility it is to live! What infinite regret should oppress our souls at the thought that we have flung shadows over so many lives which God meant to be happy; that we have put so many stumbling-blocks in people's ways to whom God meant that we should offer stepping stones; that our life has been for the shame and sorrow rather than for the uplifting and comfort of those around us! [Meyer 116]

Are we 'carpeting' the way for our fellows

Behind the word which is translated "lowliness" is our word "tapestry", and I think I shall not be far away from the Apostle's mind when I say that he counsels us to lay our life down like a soft tapestry carpet -- in kindly thoughts and gracious sympathies and helpful services, in order that the weary, bruised feet of other people may find ease and comfort on the road. For some of the ways of life are very rough and flinty, and the sharp jagged edges of circumstances cut the feet most sorely, and "going" is for many people a matter of ceaseless pain. It is the blessed privilege of Christians to lay a soft surface on the roads, by spreading over them the graciousness of tender compassions, so stooping that other pilgrims can "walk over us" and so forget the hardships of the way. That is surely the secret of "lowliness of mind," it is the very opposite to the spirit of haughtiness and pride, a spirit which multiplies the difficulties of others, and terribly aggravates the agonies of the road. [Jowett 58]



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