

PHILIPPIANS: THE SECRET OF CHRISTIAN JOY (study 3)

In the Lord: Intentions & Illness

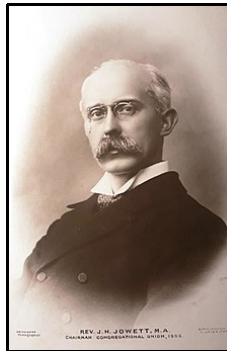
Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus ... PHIL.2:5

Study 3a: PAUL EXEMPLIFIES SELF-SACRIFICE (2:17-24)

2:17-18 Identify the irony here (John 16:32,33)

2:19-24 What may we deduce about many of the leaders of the apostolic church? Contrast Paul (John 13:1-17, 31-38; 21:15-17)

[2:19-24] And what is this hope that is so fed and sanctified “in the Lord”? “*To send Timothy shortly unto you.*” Here is a fine and heartening glimpse into the complete consecration of the Apostle’s life. Could anything be more ordinary than this sending of a message of inquiry, and yet the purpose is to be quickened by the breath of the Lord? Everything in Paul’s life is to be made “alive unto God.” All the events in his life, big or little, are to be like the coins of the realm, every one stamped with the face of the King. The mistake so many of us make is that we allow the smaller coins to go unsealed with the superscription of the King; the halfpennies and the pennies are not sanctified; the consecration service is only held for the pounds. In Paul’s life it seems as though the consecration service never ends. [Jowett 87]



Study 3b: SACRIFICE of LIFE – and HEALTH (2:25-30)

2:25-28 How does Paul’s delegation of Epaphroditus exemplify his Christ-like spirit? (Note he is called *apostolon*, v.25)

[2:19-30] He had sent everybody away whom he could trust, except Timothy and Epaphroditus. But he was extremely anxious about the welfare of his Philippian friends; and he knew that they were equally anxious about him; he gave up, therefore, the one man of all others who was dear to him -- Timothy -- and sent him to bring word about their state, and that they might be comforted in knowing about his. Because the Philippians were so true in their love to him, he counted no sacrifice too great to show his love to them. [Meyer 130]

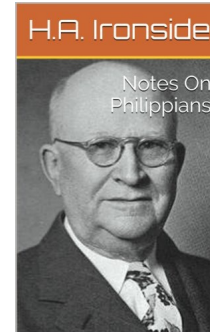
2:29-30 How had Epaphroditus come ‘close to death’?

[2:25-30] It is touching to notice that Epaphroditus himself did not seem to be nearly so much concerned about his own illness as he was that it had been the cause of sorrow to them. He was one of those thoroughly self-denying men whose motto might well be expressed in the one word upon which we have already dwelt, “Others.” [Ironsides 63]

So many of us are anaemic in our spiritual ventures, there is little or no blood in them. We take up the work of Christ, but our service is not vitalised by the sacrifice of our life. And so our work is never really alive; it is sometimes galvanised into the appearance of life, but the activity is only artificial, and it never communicates life to others. The measure of sacrifice in our labour is just the measure of our

dynamic. No blood, no life; no power. When we hazard our life in the service our power is superlative, for we then engage the mighty, co-operative ministry of the Lord who shed His blood for all men. [Jowett 103]

[2:25-30] It is evident that sickness is not always the result of sin, as some have taught. In the case of this devoted man of God, it was the result of his self-denying activity on behalf of those to whom he ministered. [Ironsides 64]



And what may we deduce about healing as practised in the early church? [i.e. the implications for the doctrine of healing guaranteed by the atonement]

[2:25-30] Let it be noted that the apostle did not consider he had any right to demand physical healing even for so faithful a laborer as Epaphroditus. Paul recognized it as simply the mercy of God, not as that to which saints have a right. This is true divine healing. And let it be remembered that sickness may be as really from God as health. It is clear that Paul never held or taught “healing in the

The Divinity – & humanity – of the Bible

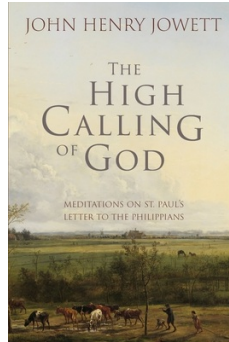
Nothing could be more completely different than this from the grand dogmatic passage traversed a little while before, nor again from the passages to follow in the next chapter, where the believer’s inmost secrets of acceptance and of life are in view, and his foresight of glory. We are placed here not in the upper heaven, nor before the judgment-throne, nor in the light of the resurrection-morning. We are just in the “hired rooms” at Rome, and we see the Missionary seated there, studying the characters of two of his brethren, and weighing the reasons for asking them, at once or soon, to arrange for a certain journey. [Moule 137]

[2:19-30] How perfectly in contrast are the Bible on the one side, with this humanity and companionship, and such a “sacred book” as the Koran on the other, with its monotonous oracles! Strange, that the man-made “sacred book” should be so little *humane* and the God-made Book so deeply and beautifully so! Yet not strange, after all. For God knows man better than man knows himself; and when He prepares a Book of books for man, we may expect it to correspond to the deep insight of Him who is Maker of both the volume and the reader. [Moule 141]

atonement,” and therefore the birth-right privilege of all Christians. Nor do we ever read of him or his fellow-laborers being miraculously healed. Paul himself, Trophimus, Timothy and Epaphroditus, all bear witness to the contrary. [Ironsides 65]

Are our sacrifices ‘blood sacrifices’?

[2:17,18] Many Christians are satisfied with expenditure in which there is no “shedding of blood.” They give away what they can spare. Their gifts are detached things, and the surrender of them necessitates no bleeding. They engage in sacrifice so long as it does not involve life; when the really vital is demanded they are not to be found ... But here is an Apostle who joyfully anticipates this supreme and critical demand. He is almost impatient at his own dribblings of blood-energy in the service of the Kingdom! He is eager, if need be, to *pour it out*. He has just mentioned his labours in the ministry of the Churches, but he feels as though these labours are scarcely worth the naming, and he turns his eager, ambitious eyes to vaster possibilities still, even to the laying down of his life itself. [Jowett 81,82]



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