

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

By

James M. Gray, D.D.

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LESSON ELEVEN

PHILIPPIANS

In the treatment of this Epistle, I propose an innovation, and intend to introduce it with a personal letter to myself written by a minister, at one time professor of biology in one of our older colleges, and now pastor of a church in a thriving city of the middle West. My object is to stimulate other pastors to follow his example, and obtain the spiritual blessing for themselves and their flocks which is certain to follow. In the course of his communication he says:

"I have adopted for this year instead of the usual reading of the Bible in the course of the year, a reading of a book over and over after your plan until I feel that I have secured its power and message. I write to bear testimony to the increased joy and profit to me of this method over the other way. I struggled first with Galatians and soon felt its message of Christian liberty in CHRIST. But when I tackled Ephesians, though so rich in phraseology, I found a task on me that did not yield its light for nearly three weeks. When, one morning, I saw its message, and in less than a half hour I secured its analysis, and I am sure that it is forever a new and still more blessed book for me. It is not only now a book of 'In CHRIST,' but I know just what its richness is as described by Conybeare and Howson, when they call it one of the most precious legacies to the churches of CHRIST that has ever been sent us.

"I took up next the book of Philippians, and had a severe struggle with it. Most commentators think that it has no special theme, but is a mere personal letter (or letters) which in the nature of the case could have not much of a sequence of thought. Usually they think the break comes at 3:2, 'Beware of dogs, beware of the concision, etc.' Well, I had been struggling with that

beautiful book for more than two weeks when, one morning, light flashed upon me, and I caught the message and the commentators are all wrong! The book is a unity, and with a special message of joy from one end of it to the other, even at 3:2.

"In the case of Galatians I must go over the ground again and write up the skeleton, but in the cases of Ephesians and Philippians I was wise enough to secure the skeleton at once and forever.

"As a sample I will record my work, which I used with evident profit and pleasure to others last night at a house-to-house prayer meeting. This skeleton may need revision, but it makes the book a new one to me:

"Theme: The Christian life one constant joy.

Keyword, Rejoice (3:1).

1. Rejoice in the fellowship of the saints (1:3-11).
2. Rejoice over afflictions that turn out for the furtherance of the Gospel (1:12-30).
3. Rejoice in the ministry for the saints (2:1-18).
4. Rejoice in the fellowship of such faithful saints as Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-3:1).
5. Rejoice that our hopes are in JESUS and not in the deeds of the law and the flesh (3:2-16).
6. Rejoice that our citizenship is in Heaven rather than on earth and in fleshly indulgences (3:17-4:1).
7. Rejoice even over such Christians as Euodias and Syntyche who, though at strife, have the root of the matter in them, whose names are written in the book of life (4:2, 3).
8. Rejoice always and over all things (4:4-9).
9. Rejoice in the bounties of GOD's people to those in need as was Paul (4:10-20).

Salutations and benediction."

The above speaks for itself, and will be found helpful and suggestive, I feel sure.

I am now to add another view of this Epistle, which I like very much, and which is suggested by E. W. Bullinger, D.D., of the Church of England.

You will recall that the great doctrinal teaching of Ephesians is that CHRIST is the Head of that body of which His people on earth are the members, and that this calling of theirs implies a corresponding responsibility on their part to walk worthily of it. This worthiness is to be shown with "**all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love**", etc. (Ephesians 4:1-16).

Now, as Dr. Bullinger aptly says, it was in the practical exhibition of this precept that these Philippian saints failed, and it was to bring conviction to them and remedy this wrong that this Epistle was chiefly written.

Hence after the salutation, an earnest exhortation is given that they might conduct themselves "**as it becometh the Gospel of Christ**," and "**stand fast in one spirit, with one soul, laboring together for the faith of the gospel**."

Then follow four examples of such a spirit which, with the exhortations, practically fill up the rest of the Epistle. Example, in other words, takes the place of precept in this Epistle.

The whole Epistle he divides in this way:

1. Salutation, 1:1, 2
2. Paul's Concern for Them, 1:3-26
3. Exhortation, and Example of CHRIST, 1:27-2:18
4. Example of Timothy, 2:19-24
5. Example of Epaphroditus, 2:25-30
6. Exhortation, and Example of Paul, 3:1-4:9
7. Their Concern for Paul, .4:10-20
8. Salutation, .4:21-23

You will have observed that the two chief examples thus indicated - CHRIST and Paul, are accompanied by exhortations, while the two minor examples, Timothy and Epaphroditus, are considered more briefly, each in six verses.

Moreover, CHRIST's example and Paul's, as our author notes, are further marked off from the other two by a statement of what each gave up, and each gained. There are seven stages in CHRIST's humiliation pointed out in the text, contrasted with the same number of stages in His exaltation. It will be a deeply interesting task to make an analysis of the passages referred to and ascertain these, in all, fourteen precious facts.

Following this example of the head, our attention is called to that of some of the members. Timothy had something of the mind that was in CHRIST. He did not act through strife or vainglory. He in lowliness of mind esteemed others better than himself. He did not look only on his own things but also on the things of others. Compare 2:19-24 with the preceding allusions to CHRIST.

Epaphroditus was another like Timothy-concerned about other saints more than about himself.

Then comes Paul's example. He, too, enumerates his gains and losses, which were like his Master's in number, though not in nature.

"CHRIST's glory which He laid aside, was real. Paul's gains, which he gave up, were unreal. They were no gains at all. He thought they were, but he found they were only losses, and counted them but 'dung' as compared with the glory of Christ."

Counts his supposed "gains," and finds them just seven. Counts the things that took their place, and finds them seven. too.

And notice that these last were all "**in Christ**." The first five were already enjoyed by faith. The last two (resurrection and advent) were still future and to be enjoyed. The first gain bore reference to CHRIST as our righteousness, the next four to CHRIST as our sanctification, the last two to CHRIST as our "**hope of glory**."

To be found in CHRIST, to know Him, and to be like Him, this was his all in all. Is it ours? This is Christianity. Nothing else is Christianity, Christianity is CHRIST.

~ end of Lesson 11 ~
