

CRUCIFIED TO LIVE

“I am crucified . . . nevertheless I live”

by

S. Franklin Logsdon

Copyright @ 1948

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

PAUL’S FORCEFUL FINALIES

“**Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord**” (Ephesians 6:10)

Authority issues in firm, faithful facts. There is no unsteadiness about truth. Out from the throne of divine power it flows with omniscient certainty, passing through chosen human channels, to fully furnish every earthly pilgrim. It is to one thirsting more than rivers of crystal water; to one hungering more than boundless stores of meat; to one fainting more than Niagaras of power; to one dying more than life itself. When all is dark, it brings light. When the perplexities of life freeze the gears of human reason, it is wisdom from above; and when the last dying ember of encouragement has faded into ashes of ignoble defeat, it is hope for the soul. Its illumination never diminishes in the light of common day, nor does its beauty lessen as the ages roll on.

Paul was a deputized deliverer of this weighty heavenly wisdom—an advocate of precious and potent revelations. He was not a plagiarist. He faithfully revealed the source of his authority (I Corinthians 11:23). He was but the amanuensis to pen and the ambassador to present the designs and the desires, the claims and the counsels of his sovereign Lord. When he enunciated a prefatory “finally,” it was not an intellectual, literary conclusion, nor yet a forensic emphasis. It did not necessarily denote the end of a series, the climax of an argument or the termination of an address. It was the keynote to a Spirit-inspired appeal.

Paul’s plea for the propagation of Truth.

“**Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you**” (II Thessalonians 3:1). These pioneer “seed-sowers” were propelled in their onward course by the breath of prayer. The reinforcement they desired for each new offensive was not so much the presence of more soldiers in the field as it was for more supplicants at the throne. They knew whence came the power to cope with stubborn resistance. They recognized the value of earnest, loyal assistance in constant heavenly communion. Thus, the solicitation was submitted with solemn seriousness. It was directed to them of like experience in matters of grace—those who were acquainted with proper spiritual procedure, who looked upon prayer in the light of its incalculable importance and who were willing to reverently and regularly engage in its sacred exercise.

While personal prayer was sought, it was for an objective purpose. Paul's aim was to spread the Word of God as rapidly as possible and to expect results from its dissemination comparable to those so evident in the believers at Thessalonica. The rush against time was motivated by the great need for the gospel, and the expectation of results was based upon Paul's unshatterable faith in the virility of the Scriptures. He sowed, Apollos watered and God gave the increase.

The Word of Truth is extolled in men, not merely by reception, but principally through application. This is precisely what made the Thessalonian church so signally successful. Perhaps their prayers would produce like success in other fields. It was this assurance which prompted Paul's appeal.

The Apostle emphasized two desires concerning his evangelistic endeavor: it must be rapid and evidential. In fact, these characteristics were prominent in his whole ministry. He was ever mindful that **"the king's business requires haste."** Delay could prove disastrous; souls were hanging in the balance.

The earlier he arrived at a given place, the sooner the populace heard about salvation; and the more rapid his advancement, the more communities could be reached. The Thessalonians could pray that the Pauline party might enjoy bodily strength, spiritual understanding, travelling mercies, open doors and ready reception. Since it was Paul's policy to **"run so as to win,"** he had a pronounced longing to see evidences of fruitfulness—the Word being extolled in men and women. Hence, the Apostle's tender solicitude of the faithful saints at Thessalonica proves that prayer makes a potent contribution to evangelistic accomplishments.

Paul's plea for the preservation of unity.

"Finally, brethren . . . be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (II Corinthians 13:11).

This is a prescription which assures the maximum of spiritual blessing. It is a prescription with promise—**"and the God of love and peace shall be with you."** That is to say, when the conditions are met, God will somehow manifest His presence. How very necessary it becomes for God's people to know and to cultivate those conditions.

First, Paul urged the brethren to be perfect. An impossibility? No, not when we once grasp the essential truth. Imperfect humans may have perfect hearts toward God. Job was perfect by divine declaration and by human demonstration. He proved that his devotion to God was not dependent upon people, possessions or prosperity. His losses were both sudden and severe. In rapid succession, he was dispossessed of his cattle, his camels, his children, his home, his health and the help of his wife. Yet, through it all, he maintained steady confidence in the Almighty and firmly affirmed his determination to trust God though he were slain.

His own testimony is enlightening: **"He hath stripped me of my glory . . . He hath destroyed me on every side and I am gone . . . young children despised me all my inward friends abhorred me . . . I know that my redeemer liveth . . . in my flesh shall I see God."** Because he was perfect in heart toward God, God was with him and blessed him abundantly.

To be perfect would seem a sufficient stipulation. But had Paul merely said, “*Henceforth, this is the order of the day for the brethren—Be ye perfect,*” his statement may have lacked clarity. They could well have queried, “Of what does this practical perfection consist?” Thus, it was not tautological when Paul, through the Spirit, enlarged upon the matter, extending it to a point of comprehensive completeness.

Being perfect toward God should result in personal satisfaction with the divine will, a unification of minds to comply with the divine purpose and a disposition of heart to live together amiably. Comfort, oneness of mind and peace are, subjectively, evident results of the very thing for which the Apostle was pressing.

Then, there is the objective desire—“**the God of love and peace shall be with you.**” How sorely the church militant needs the presence of Him whose love and peace furnish an invigorating and elevating atmosphere. For so long a time the work has bogged down due to the cluttering impedimenta of wood, hay and stubble, the product of careless unspirituality. For so long a time, also, the atmosphere has been kept tense and unwholesome by the introduction of personal temperaments—varied and sometimes vicious—into church activity. The presence of the Lord would prove a veritable breath from heaven—an air-conditioning to dissipate some of the foulness existent among believers. This is the stimulating experience which the beloved leader of the early church coveted for all true believers.

Paul’s plea for the pursuit of power.

“**Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might**” (Ephesians 6:10).

Preparedness was more than an axiom with Paul. Facing life with its varying and inevitable vicissitudes bodes ill for the one who drifts aimlessly in the current of indifference. Nor can one, through self-determination, muster up sufficient stamina to fight the good fight of faith. Too much do we find ourselves in the throes of a modern asceticism or a technical determinism with fixed formulae utterly foreign to the divine way of life. No, there is no substitute for the power which His supreme might imparts. We must have it. Indeed, without it, we present all the sad abjection of Ephraim—worthless, weak, willful and wondering (Hosea 7).

This plea of Paul’s for the pursuit of power finds synonymous support in many New Testament passages. The young believers at Colossae, Hierapolis and Laodicea were plagued by the insurgence of a three-fold subversion; namely, Judaism, asceticism and Gnosticism. The only successful antidote was strength to withstand, for malignancy cannot flourish in healthy tissue.

The Apostle prayed incessantly that they be “**strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.**” When he counseled Christians to “**put on Christ,**” to “**stand and having done all to stand,**” to “**grow in grace,**” to “**be a good soldier of Jesus Christ,**” he was encouraging a spiritual development which would put stronger servants in the field and more stable suppliants before the throne.

This is timely advice. With dehydrated and devitalized spiritual food robbing the body of Christ of needful health-giving elements and with swarms of parasitic cults and isms daily attacking, it is most essential that heed should be given at once to the Apostle's plea to draw freely from that supreme might which endows the weak with strength and bulwarks against all insurgent foes. Where sin abounds, grace superabounds, and what is grace but implanted power? Regardless of the conditions to which one may be subjected, the inspiring words of our Lord have wonderworking contemporary value, "**My grace is sufficient for thee.**"

Paul's plea for the purity of thought.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Paul was not proposing psychic exercises or advancing a formula for mental hygiene. It is more basic than that. To captivate the thoughts approvingly is to cultivate character appropriately; for, "**as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.**"

How important this is from the spiritual point of view. Words are thoughts expressed, but many thoughts do not issue in expression. Yet, the Lord knows even our thoughts. Some thoughts, if expressed, would humiliate others and embarrass ourselves, but does it not concern us that the altogether pure One knows them?

What are the thoughts of the Infinite? "**I know the thoughts that I think toward you,**" saith the Lord, "**thoughts of peace and not of evil**" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Suppose He did not think peace toward us? How sad is even the hypothesis. Then it would be evil; then it would be judgment. When the shipmaster on that notorious, Joppa-bound freighter discovered Jonah fast asleep in the lower hold, he cried with terrifying abruptness, "**Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not**" (Jonah 1:6).

Somehow, men want the Almighty to think upon them when cruel blasts of adversity threaten to destroy. They desire thoughts of love, thoughts of mercy, thoughts of grace, thoughts of helpfulness and hope. There should be more evident reciprocity. God desires us to think of Him. The Lord Jesus was pointed in asking, "**What think ye of Christ?**" If this be construed as a test of knowledge on the part of the disciples—a mere expression of opinion—what about the memorial our Lord instituted on the night of His extreme sorrow? Was it not to encourage His people to think of Him in His passion and propitiatory provision? "**Do this in remembrance of Me.**"

Mind is the sum total of our consciousness; thus, mental behavior is a psychological intricacy. Concepts, clear and confused, are constantly formed through thinking processes which are variously affected. Wrong training, perverted desires, diabolical encouragement—all produce questionable impressions. These issue in waywardness and folly. Hence, the Apostle urged that our thoughts be led captive unto Christ (II Corinthians 10:5).

The imagery is not that of wild and wiry steeds being driven into a corral. It is not that kind of a struggle. Rather does it consist of making Christ the object of our life and allowing His magnetic power to draw our thoughts to Him. It is letting the mind of Christ be in us.

But, as in all matters of practical importance, this subject is treated with interesting detail. The six things delineated in the text, i. e., truth, honesty, justice, purity, loveliness and good reputation, form a safe and substantial foundation upon which to establish our thoughts. In reality there are but two categories here. The first is truth; the second is purity.

Truth is the basis of orthodoxy. There is no straight thinking (*orthos doxa*) if the well-defined lines of truth are not adhered to carefully. When one thinks in terms of truth, it is obvious that there will be both honesty and justice in one's conduct. However, it is necessary to advise purity as well.

Some things which are true may not necessarily be wholesome, whereas purity becomes the child of God. **"The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times"** (Psalm 12:6).

If God's words are so pure, then His thoughts are pure. This is why He requests purity in our thinking. Just as thoughts of truth produce honesty and justice, even so do thoughts of purity result in personal loveliness and favorable reputation.

Surveying the whole field of mental activity, the Apostle waxed eloquent in his counsel: "Think on everything that is excellent and praiseworthy," he added. Here is elevation and worthwhileness. Stooping to the vernacular and engaging in common, ordinary, everyday street parlance is not comely. Loftiness alone becomes the one who is positionally seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

If we had an acute awareness of this fact and were we to practice the principles involved in this plea of Paul, surely we should be introduced to more gentle frames and sweeter temperaments. Not only this, but we should surely more definitely exalt Christ in our daily lives. Any procedure which points to so sacred an end should be diligently pursued and solemnly practiced. **"Think on these things."**

Paul's plea for the permanence of rejoicing.

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe" (Philippians 3:1). This faithful advisor admits that no endeavor is irksome to him which in any wise contributes to the well-being of others. He shares with the Apostle Peter the pedagogical principle of constantly reminding. What is worthwhile is worth learning well. Repetition, therefore, is profitable.

This fifth, forceful "finally" is, in many ways, the capstone of all Paul's similarly introduced counsel. If the saints are prevailing in prayer for the propagation of the Word;

- If they are enjoying the presence of the God of love and peace;
- If they are growing strong in the power which His supreme might imparts;
- If their minds are filled with truth and purity;

Then, what can hinder an exuberant spirit and an outflow of praise?

Thus, the Apostle knew well what he was recommending when he said, “**rejoice in the Lord.**”

The kind of joy he had in mind was not superficial outbursts of hilarity.

- It was not an intermittent display of gladness.
- It was not a temperamental ray of sunshine which forces its way through when the clouds part for the moment.
- It was not the chorus of childish glee which ceases with suddenness at the stub of the toe.
- It was not the chant of a temporarily charmed beneficiary pitched in a minor key.

No, it was none of this. It was, rather, the sweet melody of the new song in the heart of one who has been brought out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay with feet set upon a rock and the goings established. It was the tuneful praise of an ever-appreciative soul for unfailing compassions, enduring love and abounding grace. It was the joy bells of the heart which peal forth clear notes of praise to a beneficent God in a continuous display of gratitude. He had in mind deep-seated gladness which will enjoy expression in spite of circumstances. For a personal example, the Beloved Apostle declared, “**Most gladly will I glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ might be upon me.**” This is what he urged upon the Philippians and upon us.

What did he mean when he added, “**For you it is safe.**”

Rejoicing is a safeguard against discouragement both for ourselves and for those about us. One cannot become morose or melancholy who rejoices. Gladness dissipates despondency. It is noticeable to others and is reflected in them. It brightens the gloomiest atmosphere. “Sing and shout the clouds away; night will turn to day” is more than lyrical imagination. Then, too, rejoicing is a safeguard against the wiles of the wicked one. The devil soon discovers that a rejoicing saint is not very susceptible to his attacks. Rejoicing renders his strategy ineffective.

When the precepts of the Lord are obediently applied, the true, divinely designed spiritual status becomes the norm of Christian experience.

The main reason for the prefatory “**finally**” in the foregoing instructions of the Apostle is that there is no changeableness about these principles. They are fixed and effective—a workable formula for the Lord’s people in every age, backed by the integrity and power of Him who is the same yesterday, today and forever.

~ end of chapter 18 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>