

PHILIPPIANS DEVOTIONALS-C H Spurgeon

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Philippians 1:21

The believer did not always live to Christ. He began to do so when God the Holy Spirit convinced him of sin, and when by grace he was brought to see the dying Saviour making a propitiation for his guilt. From the moment of the new and celestial birth the man begins to live to Christ. Jesus is to believers the one pearl of great price, for whom we are willing to part with all that we have. He has so completely won our love, that it beats alone for him; to his glory we would live, and in defence of his gospel we would die; he is the pattern of our life, and the model after which we would sculpture our character. Paul's words mean more than most men think; they imply that the aim and end of his life was Christ—nay, his life itself was Jesus. In the words of an ancient saint, he did eat, and drink, and sleep eternal life. Jesus was his very breath, the soul of his soul, the heart of his heart, the life of his life. Can you say, as a professing Christian, that you live up to this idea? Can you honestly say that for you to live is Christ? Your business—are you doing it for Christ? Is it not done for self-aggrandizement and for family advantage? Do you ask, "Is that a mean reason?" For the Christian it is. He professes to live for Christ; how can he live for another object without committing a spiritual adultery? Many there are who carry out this principle in some measure; but who is there that dare say that he hath lived wholly for Christ as the apostle did? Yet, this alone is the true life of a Christian—its source, its sustenance, its fashion, its end, all gathered up in one word—Christ Jesus. Lord, accept me; I here present myself, praying to live only in thee and to thee. Let me be as the bullock which stands between the plough and the altar, to work or to be sacrificed; and let my motto be, "Ready for either."

Philippians 1:27

The word "conversation" does not merely mean our talk and converse with one another, but the whole course of our life and behaviour in the world. The Greek word signifies the actions and the privileges of citizenship: and thus we are commanded to let our actions, as citizens of the New Jerusalem, be such as becometh the gospel of Christ. What sort of conversation is this? In the first place, the gospel is very simple. So Christians should be simple and plain in their habits. There should be about our manner, our speech, our dress, our whole behaviour, that simplicity which is the very soul of beauty. The gospel is pre-eminently true, it is gold without dross; and the Christian's life will be lustreless and valueless without the jewel of truth. The gospel is a very fearless gospel, it boldly proclaims the truth, whether men like it or not: we must be equally faithful and unflinching. But the gospel is also very gentle. Mark this spirit in its Founder: "a bruised reed he will not break." Some professors are sharper than a thorn-hedge; such men are not like Jesus. Let us seek to win others by the gentleness of our words and acts. The gospel is very loving. It is the message of the God of love to a lost and fallen race. Christ's last command to his disciples was, "Love one another." O for more real, hearty union and love to all the saints; for more tender compassion towards the souls of the worst and vilest of men! We must not forget that the gospel of Christ is holy. It never excuses sin: it pardons it, but only through an atonement. If our life is to resemble the gospel, we must shun, not merely the grosser vices, but everything that would hinder our perfect conformity to Christ. For his sake, for our own sakes, and for the sakes of others, we must strive day by day to let our conversation be more in accordance with his gospel.

Philippians 2:8

Jesus is the great teacher of lowliness of heart. We need daily to learn of him. See the Master taking a towel and washing his disciples' feet! Follower of Christ, wilt thou not humble thyself? See him as the Servant of servants, and surely thou canst not be proud! Is not this sentence the compendium of his biography, "He humbled himself"? Was he not on earth always stripping off first one robe of honour and then another, till, naked, he was fastened to the cross, and there did he not empty out his inmost self, pouring out his life-blood, giving up for all of us, till they laid him penniless in a borrowed grave? How low was our dear Redeemer brought! How then can we be proud? Stand at the foot of the cross, and count the purple drops by which you have been cleansed; see the thorn-crown; mark his scourged shoulders, still gushing with encrimsoned rills; see hands and feet given up to the rough iron, and his whole self to mockery and scorn; see the bitterness,

and the pangs, and the throes of inward grief, showing themselves in his outward frame; hear the thrilling shriek, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And if you do not lie prostrate on the ground before that cross, you have never seen it: if you are not humbled in the presence of Jesus, you do not know him. You were so lost that nothing could save you but the sacrifice of God's only begotten. Think of that, and as Jesus stooped for you, bow yourself in lowliness at his feet. A sense of Christ's amazing love to us has a greater tendency to humble us than even a consciousness of our own guilt. May the Lord bring us in contemplation to Calvary, then our position will no longer be that of the pompous man of pride, but we shall take the humble place of one who loves much because much has been forgiven him. Pride cannot live beneath the cross. Let us sit there and learn our lesson, and then rise and carry it into practice.

Philippians 2:15

We use lights to make manifest. A Christian man should so shine in his life, that a person could not live with him a week without knowing the gospel. His conversation should be such that all who are about him should clearly perceive whose he is, and whom he serves; and should see the image of Jesus reflected in his daily actions. Lights are intended for guidance. We are to help those around us who are in the dark. We are to hold forth to them the Word of life. We are to point sinners to the Saviour, and the weary to a divine resting-place. Men sometimes read their Bibles, and fail to understand them; we should be ready, like Philip, to instruct the inquirer in the meaning of God's Word, the way of salvation, and the life of godliness. Lights are also used for warning. On our rocks and shoals a light-house is sure to be erected. Christian men should know that there are many false lights shown everywhere in the world, and therefore the right light is needed. The wreckers of Satan are always abroad, tempting the ungodly to sin under the name of pleasure; they hoist the wrong light, be it ours to put up the true light upon every dangerous rock, to point out every sin, and tell what it leads to, that so we may be clear of the blood of all men, shining as lights in the world. Lights also have a very cheering influence, and so have Christians. A Christian ought to be a comforter, with kind words on his lips, and sympathy in his heart; he should carry sunshine wherever he goes, and diffuse happiness around him.

Gracious Spirit dwell with me;
I myself would gracious be,
And with words that help and heal
Would thy life in mine reveal,
And with actions bold and meek
Would for Christ my Saviour speak.

Philippians 3:8

Spiritual knowledge of Christ will be a personal knowledge. I cannot know Jesus through another person's acquaintance with him. No, I must know him myself; I must know him on my own account. It will be an intelligent knowledge—I must know him, not as the visionary dreams of him, but as the Word reveals him. I must know his natures, divine and human. I must know his offices—his attributes—his works—his shame—his glory. I must meditate upon him until I "comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." It will be an affectionate knowledge of him; indeed, if I know him at all, I must love him. An ounce of heart knowledge is worth a ton of head learning. Our knowledge of him will be a satisfying knowledge. When I know my Saviour, my mind will be full to the brim—I shall feel that I have that which my spirit panted after. "This is that bread whereof if a man eat he shall never hunger." At the same time it will be an exciting knowledge; the more I know of my Beloved, the more I shall want to know. The higher I climb the loftier will be the summits which invite my eager footsteps. I shall want the more as I get the more. Like the miser's treasure, my gold will make me covet more. To conclude; this knowledge of Christ Jesus will be a most happy one; in fact, so elevating, that sometimes it will completely bear me up above all trials, and doubts, and sorrows; and it will, while I enjoy it, make me something more than "Man that is born of woman, who is of few days, and full of trouble"; for it will fling about me the immortality of the ever living Saviour, and gird me with the golden girdle of his eternal joy. Come, my soul, sit at Jesus's feet and learn of him all this day.

Philippians 3:10

The doctrine of a risen Saviour is exceedingly precious. The resurrection is the corner-stone of the entire building of Christianity. It is the key-stone of the arch of our salvation. It would take a volume to set forth all the streams of living water which flow from this one sacred source, the resurrection of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; but to know that he has risen, and to have fellowship with him as such—communing with the

risen Saviour by possessing a risen life—seeing him leave the tomb by leaving the tomb of worldliness ourselves, this is even still more precious. The doctrine is the basis of the experience, but as the flower is more lovely than the root, so is the experience of fellowship with the risen Saviour more lovely than the doctrine itself. I would have you believe that Christ rose from the dead so as to sing of it, and derive all the consolation which it is possible for you to extract from this well-ascertained and well-witnessed fact; but I beseech you, rest not contented even there. Though you cannot, like the disciples, see him visibly, yet I bid you aspire to see Christ Jesus by the eye of faith; and though, like Mary Magdalene, you may not “touch” him, yet may you be privileged to converse with him, and to know that he is risen, you yourselves being risen in him to newness of life. To know a crucified Saviour as having crucified all my sins, is a high degree of knowledge; but to know a risen Saviour as having justified me, and to realize that he has bestowed upon me new life, having given me to be a new creature through his own newness of life, this is a noble style of experience: short of it, none ought to rest satisfied. May you both “know him, and the power of his resurrection.” Why should souls who are quickened with Jesus, wear the grave-clothes of worldliness and unbelief? Rise, for the Lord is risen.

Philippians 3:21 This Body Fashioned Anew

OFTEN when we are racked with pain and unable to think or worship, we feel that this indeed is “the body of our humiliation.” And when we are tempted by the passions which rise from the flesh, we do not think the word “vile” at all too vigorous a translation. Our bodies humble us, and that is about the best thing they do for us. Oh, that we were duly lowly, because our bodies ally us with animals, and even link us with the dust!

But our Savior, the Lord Jesus, shall change all this. We shall be fashioned like His own body of glory. This will take place in all who believe in Jesus. By faith their souls have been transformed, and their bodies will undergo such a renewal as shall fit them for their regenerated spirits. How soon this grand transformation will happen we cannot tell, but the thought of it should help us to bear the trials of today and all the woes of the flesh. In a little while we shall be as Jesus now is—no more aching brows, no more swollen limbs, no more dim eyes, no more fainting hearts. The old man shall be no more a bundle of infirmities, nor the sick man a mass of agony. “Like unto his glorious body.” What an expression! Even our flesh shall rest in hope of such a resurrection!

Philippians 4:6-7 Prayer, Thanksgiving, Praise

NO care, but all prayer. No anxiety, but much joyful communion with God. Carry your desires to the Lord of your life, the guardian of your soul. Go to Him with two portions of prayer and one of fragrant praise. Do not pray doubtfully, but thankfully. Consider that you have your petitions, and therefore thank God for His grace. He is giving you grace; give Him thanks. Hide nothing. Allow no want to lie rankling in your bosom; “make known your requests.” Run not to man. Go only to your God, the Father of Jesus, who loves you in Him.

This shall bring you God’s own peace. You shall not be able to understand the peace which you shall enjoy. It will enfold you in its infinite embrace. Heart and mind through Christ Jesus shall be steeped in a sea of rest. Come life or death, poverty, pain, slander, you shall dwell in Jesus above every ruffling wind or darkening cloud. Will you not obey this dear command?

Yes, Lord, I do believe thee; but, I beseech thee help mine unbelief.

Philippians 4:9 To Others, an “Ensample”

IT is well when a man can with advantage be so minutely copied, as Paul might have been. Oh, for grace to imitate him this day and every day!

Should we, through divine grace, carry into practice the Pauline teaching, we may claim the promise which is now open before us; and what a promise it is! God, who loves peace, makes peace, and breathes peace, will be with us. “Peace be with you” is a sweet benediction; but for the God of peace to be with us is far more. Thus we have the fountain as well as the streams, the sun as well as his beams. If the God of peace be with us, we shall enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding, even though outward circumstances should threaten to disturb. If men quarrel, we shall be sure to be peacemakers, if the Maker of peace be with us.

It is in the way of truth that real peace is found. If we quit the faith or leave the path of righteousness under the notion of promoting peace, we shall be greatly mistaken. First pure, then peaceable, is the order of wisdom and of fact. Let us keep to Paul’s line, and we shall have the God of peace with us as He was with the apostle.

Philippians 4:11

These words show us that contentment is not a natural propensity of man. "Ill weeds grow apace." Covetousness, discontent, and murmuring are as natural to man as thorns are to the soil. We need not sow thistles and brambles; they come up naturally enough, because they are indigenous to earth: and so, we need not teach men to complain; they complain fast enough without any education. But the precious things of the earth must be cultivated. If we would have wheat, we must plough and sow; if we want flowers, there must be the garden, and all the gardener's care. Now, contentment is one of the flowers of heaven, and if we would have it, it must be cultivated; it will not grow in us by nature; it is the new nature alone that can produce it, and even then we must be specially careful and watchful that we maintain and cultivate the grace which God has sown in us. Paul says, "I have learned ... to be content;" as much as to say, he did not know how at one time. It cost him some pains to attain to the mystery of that great truth. No doubt he sometimes thought he had learned, and then broke down. And when at last he had attained unto it, and could say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content," he was an old, grey-headed man, upon the borders of the grave—a poor prisoner shut up in Nero's dungeon at Rome. We might well be willing to endure Paul's infirmities, and share the cold dungeon with him, if we too might by any means attain unto his good degree. Do not indulge the notion that you can be contented with learning, or learn without discipline. It is not a power that may be exercised naturally, but a science to be acquired gradually. We know this from experience. Brother, hush that murmur, natural though it be, and continue a diligent pupil in the College of Content

Philippians 4:12

There are many who know "how to be abased" who have not learned "how to abound." When they are set upon the top of a pinnacle their heads grow dizzy, and they are ready to fall. The Christian far oftener disgraces his profession in prosperity than in adversity. It is a dangerous thing to be prosperous. The crucible of adversity is a less severe trial to the Christian than the refining pot of prosperity. Oh, what leanness of soul and neglect of spiritual things have been brought on through the very mercies and bounties of God! Yet this is not a matter of necessity, for the apostle tells us that he knew how to abound. When he had much he knew how to use it. Abundant grace enabled him to bear abundant prosperity. When he had a full sail he was loaded with much ballast, and so floated safely. It needs more than human skill to carry the brimming cup of mortal joy with a steady hand, yet Paul had learned that skill, for he declares, "In all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry." It is a divine lesson to know how to be full, for the Israelites were full once, but while the flesh was yet in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them. Many have asked for mercies that they might satisfy their own hearts' lust. Fulness of bread has often made fulness of blood, and that has brought on wantonness of spirit. When we have much of God's providential mercies, it often happens that we have but little of God's grace, and little gratitude for the bounties we have received. We are full and we forget God: satisfied with earth, we are content to do without heaven. Rest assured it is harder to know how to be full than it is to know how to be hungry—so desperate is the tendency of human nature to pride and forgetfulness of God. Take care that you ask in your prayers that God would teach you "how to be full."

"Let not the gifts thy love bestows
Estrange our hearts from thee."

Philippians 4:19 Limitless Riches

PAUL'S God is our God, and He will supply all our need. Paul felt sure of this in reference to the Philippians, and we feel sure of it as to ourselves. God will do it, for it is like Him: He loves us, He delights to bless us, and it will glorify Him to do so. His pity, His power, His love, His faithfulness, all work together that we be not famished.

What a measure doth the Lord go by: "According to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The riches of His grace are large, but what shall we say of the riches of His glory? His "riches of glory by Christ Jesus," who shall form an estimate of this? According to this immeasurable measure will God fill up the immense abyss of our necessities. He makes the Lord Jesus the receptacle and the channel of His fullness, and then He imparts to us His wealth of love in its highest form. Hallelujah!

The writer knows what it is to be tried in the work of the Lord. Fidelity has been recompensed with anger, and liberal givers have stopped their subscriptions. But he whom they sought to oppress has not been one penny the poorer; nay, rather he has been the richer, for this promise has been true, "My God shall supply all our need." God's supplies are surer than any bank.

