

GOD'S SCHOOL OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Beloved of the Lord:

The experiences of a Christian may not always be Christian experience: but the beloved apostle Paul shines brightly as the greatest exponent of Christianity. He testifies that profitable lessons had been learned in God's school of circumstances:

"I have learned, in those circumstances in which I am, to be satisfied in myself" - Phil. 4:11 - J.N.D. Trans. Note THREE DOMINANT FACTS -

(1) The Proof of Christian Experience - "I have learned". Indelible and lasting lessons were impressed in heart and mind, proving daily advancement in the School of God. How few are able to testify this today! Do we learn?

(2) The Place of Christian Experience - "in those circumstances in which I am." Not the past, nor the future circumstances, but the present was the place of schooling. Invaluable lessons were derived from each day's experience, even when a prisoner in Rome!

(3) The Power of Christian Experience - "to be satisfied in myself", Note that Paul does not say "with myself" but "in myself." There was the constant possession of an inward sufficiency above all circumstances, whether pleasant or difficult. What was it but Christ Himself! Note the Simple and clear outline of the Philippian epistle:

(a) CHRIST WAS HIS LIFE - "For me to live is Christ" - Phil. 1:21. Not preaching, not teaching nor fellowship with beloved Saints, for now he was a prisoner deprived of all he had enjoyed. The Lord Himself must take the place of the work. "God caused this imprisonment to be the means through which Christ became his all. Living or dying, his eye was more fixed on Christ than even the work." Will it be true of us?

(b) CHRIST WAS HIS EXAMPLE - Phil. 2:5-8. Read the portion. Christ, in His amazing stoop of humiliation his pattern to follow. Not Christ as He is - but as He was, descending from highest glory to the lowest depths of Shame! "His humiliation is a proof that He is God! As God He emptied Himself; as man, He humbled Himself." How we need to learn what a terrible curse is pride! but what tremendous power there is in humility! "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" - Phil. 2:5. This is Christian experience!

(c) CHRIST WAS HIS GOAL - "I press toward the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus" - Phil. 3:14 JND. TRANS. CHRIST in glory was ever before Paul's heart! Christ was the "prize" toward which he was pressing - to see CHRIST, AS HE IS! Blessed objective! He had no desire as James and John, to be either on His right hand or left in glory; he wished no place for himself. What self-effacement! On the Demaseus road Paul had first met the glorified Christ and from that moment his eye and heart had ever been fixed on the heavenly Christ! His great heart only longed to see CHRIST IN CLORY FACE TO FACE!

(d) CHRIST WAS HIS STRENGTH - "I have strength for all things in Him that gives me power" - Phil. 4:13 - JND. TRANS. In all his circumstances, Christ was his strength. Christ was his Superiority in all circumstances of life, an experience for Paul he had learned in a practical way. He knew what his God was by his personal experiences through the Superiority of Christ's Strength alone!

What is the important lesson revealed for the Christian today through Paul's testimony. Is it not to prove, in joy or sorrow, sickness or health, poverty or plenty, trial and suffering, etc. and even in the present state of God's people on earth, His assembly - we would be able to say -

I HAVE CHRIST - WHAT WANT I MORE?

Faithfully Yours in Christ,

