

PREFACE

I am fully aware of the fact that in order to have a clear and full comprehension of spiritual truth, one needs a certain degree of spirituality, which is not found with a newly converted person, nor with a mere babe in Christ. (1 Cor. 2 and 3).

But the one thing pre-eminently needful—to the understanding of the truth as it is in Christ, is, honesty of heart and pureness of purpose. Truth demands investigation to its proper conception. We therefore need an unbiased mind, a teachable spirit and a fair conclusion or else we shall "wrest the scriptures to our own destruction."

We have not sought in the treatise of this important subject to enter the speculative, nor have we endeavored to define plainly everything touched upon herein. This would have demanded a much larger book. We have simply been led to give the reader thoughts to ponder upon. The truth herein set forth has a number of years ago become the personal conviction of the writer, upon hard study on the subject. We herein send it forth in His name, asking Him to bless it to every reader.

Yours sincerely

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A Better Resurrection.

"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." (Phil. 3:11).

"Women received their dead raised to life again, and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance that they might obtain a better resurrection." (Heb. 11:35)

THE TEXT SETTING

The Epistle to the Philippians was occasioned by these Christians sending Paul a donation while in prison (Phil 4:10-18); whereupon he writes epistle as an acknowledgment of having received their gift, and as a token of appreciation and thankfulness for their care of him. This is no doubt the sweetest Epistle in the entire catalogue of Epistles. There were no disorders in this church to be set right; there was no false doctrine here to refute. Much of this Epistle has to do with Paul's own experience. The true character and nature of Christian living and experience are beautifully worked out in this Epistle. (1:6, 21; 2:5-13; 4:13) All Christian experience is in direct relation with Christ; He is its source, its spring, and it all emanates from Him; and flows back to Him by a life of devotion and fruitfulness.

In strong language and glowing terms Paul sets before these Philippians the Lord Jesus Christ. He is here set before us as the believer's life; (Chapt. 1) as the believer's pattern; (Chapt. 2) as the believer's righteousness; (Chapt. 3) and as the believer's strength and sufficiency. (Chapt. 4)

In Chapter three in which our text is found; we have first, a warning against Judaizing teachers, (3:3-1) second, a description of Saul the legalist; (3:4-6) third, the source of all true divine righteousness; (3:7-9) fourth, Paul's desire and personal ambition; (3:10-14) fifth, an exhortation to likemindedness; (3:15-17) sixth, an example of such who

have lost this desire and ambition ; the consequence of which is a cold faith, a carnal security and a worldly life; (3:8-19) and seventh, the believer's expectation. (3:20-21). Our text then is Paul's own personal aspiration and ambition; and manifests clearly the fact that there was something beyond and above that which Paul had hitherto attained too. (3:10-14) This was not a mere human, neither a vain ambition, but it was a divinely inwrought ambition. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

1. What does Paul Mean by the Resurrection of the Dead.

When He says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead;" he gives us to understand that he does not refer to an ordinary resurrection. It was not that resurrection in which folks generally believed in at this time. No one need to be concerned about nor put forth any effort, nor live any special kind of a life to be resurrected some day. There is no cause for alarm about that; but there is cause for alarm about the resurrection whereof Paul speaks.

I. Does Paul here doubt the resurrection of the dead? Is he afraid that when he dies he might never be resurrected? I say no; for we have no reason to believe that Paul ever was doubtful concerning the resurrection. We have illustrations of the resurrection everywhere.

(a) In nature. — The beautiful dawn and daylight always follow the still dark night. The seed that is planted into the earth and rots, springs forth into a new plant. The beautiful spring time, with its balmy air, singing birds, green fields and blossoming flowers; follow the cold, bleak and bare winter. Thus nature itself speaks to us repeatedly of resurrection.

(b) In the Scriptures.—One dispensation, wanes away and dies out; and another one follows closely on its heels. Noah's ark stands as a strong type of the resurrection, (1. Pet. 3:20-21) Noah and his family went into the ark, and in type or figure were dead; they went through the flood just as much as all the others did. The ark did not keep back the judgment of God, but it bore it and Noah and his family passed through the flood and came forth upon a new and purged earth and began a new dispensation. The sheaf of the first fruits gathered out of the field, and brought to the Priest; who waved it before, the Lord, was a type of resurrection— first, of Christ, then of "them that are Christ's at His coining."

(Lev. 23:10-14; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Aaron's rod, a lifeless dead stick; laid before the Lord in the tabernacle, budded, bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds; all in one night, is a type of the resurrection of Christ. (Num. 17). Elisha's ministry was one of healing and life, and not of stern judgment and condemnation; like that of Elijah. Elijah was the stern, rough prophet of judgment; a type of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ; while Elisha stands for the healing, helpful and benevolent ministry of Christ. Elisha's ministry throughout typifies resurrection; for here it is we have recorded the restoring to life of the Shunammite's son. (2. Kin. 4:18-37.)

Ezekiel's valley of dry bones—which lay scattered and were very dry ; brought together, covered with flesh and skin, with breath put therein so that they lived is a beautiful type of resurrection. (Ezk. 37:1-10.)

Jonah in the whale's belly and spit out upon the land is another type of the resurrection. When the Jew's came to Christ seeking a sign ; Christ declared to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah : For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Mat. 12:39-40.)

Thus the history of Jonah's life is a standing type of the resurrection. As a Jew we must believe that Paul knew all these Scriptures; and that he was not afraid that there was no resurrection. Not only do we have illustrations of the resurrection in nature and in the Scriptures; but,

(c) Facts sustain the fact of a resurrection.—Christ declares, (Jno. 5:28-29; "marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth ;they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Jesus Christ all through His earthly life raised the dead, as an evidence that He has power over death. He says, Jno. 5:26; "For as the Father has life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." Therefore He could truthfully say, "I am the resurrection and the life." (Jno. 11:25.)

All those that Christ raised from the dead during His earthly life; were, only samples of what should happen in that future day, in which He should exercise His power. To this Paul adds his testimony in vindicating himself and his preaching before Felix; when accused by his own kinsman after the flesh; saying, "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24:15)

(d) Christ's own resurrection proves the fact that there is a resurrection of the dead. The resurrection of the dead is certain because Christ arose from the dead, as a full proof and evidence of the veracity of what He Himself declared concerning Himself; when He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." (Jno. 11:25.)

In 1 Cor. 15:13-19, we have seven 'ifs' in reference to the resurrection of Christ.

"Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

Here then we are plainly taught that the resurrection of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead stand or fall together. We are here taught the importance of the resurrection of Christ, and what all is vain, and what we are if Christ was not raised. For says Paul in verse 32; "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." If there is no resurrection of the dead we are the most foolish people this world ever knew, for giving up t the world, denying its worldly and sinful enjoyments, and suffering persecution and ridicule for Christ's sake. If it is true that when you are dead, that ends all; we might as well follow the old maxim, "a short life and a gay one." If there is no resurrection of the dead; we might as well enjoy this life, because it will be the only one we can ever enjoy. But Paul concludes his argument and boldly affirms; "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept." (verse 20) There is no doubt in his mind as to the resurrection of Christ. The fact of Christ's resurrection is proven,—

First: By the empty tomb and the clothes lying therein. On the resurrection morning Peter and John took a run to the tomb where Christ was buried. John out run Peter and came to the tomb first; where upon he looked into the tomb and saw the clothes lying. Then Peter came also, but he was not satisfied with merely looking into the tomb; but he went into the sepulchre and found the clothes lying there, but Christ was gone. (Jno. 20:1-8) If, as the Jews reported, "the disciples came at night, while the soldiers slept and stole His body;" were true, we must believe they would have also taken His clothes along, but the fact that the clothes lay in the tomb unmolested proves the fact of a supernatural happening. He just crept out of His grave clothes like a locust creeps out of his shell.

Second; By His appearings after the resurrection. In (1 Cor. 15:3-8), we have a number of these enumerated. All told, Christ appeared to His disciples eleven times before His ascension. He appeared to three persons after his ascension, i.e., Stephen; (Acts 7) Saul; (Acts 9; 1 Cor. 15:8) and John on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:13-18)

Third: By the change in the lives of His disciples after His resurrection.

Those timid, fearful disciples, who had all forsook Him and fled at His trial; now go forth everywhere preaching boldly in His name.

What made them so bold? They were disheartened enough when their leader, the one whom they hoped had come to deliver Israel, and to set up His Kingdom; was being tried and crucified. Surely all their hopes had been blasted; but He came forth, met them, talked with them and ate with them. He showed "Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs;" and sent upon them the promised comforter: this is what so changed their lives and gave them such courage and boldness. (Acts. 1:3-8; 4-13).

Fourth: By the Ford's Supper. If Jesus Christ would have been an impostor, and would not have been raised from the dead; all that He ever did, said and instituted would have passed away with Him. The fact that it is yet existing and being practiced is a convincing

proof of the fact of His resurrection. For, every time we partake of the Lord's supper " we show forth His death until He come." (1 Cor. 11:26) The existence of the Christian Church, and the practices of the Christian ordinances, declare to us the fact of Christ's resurrection. Having therefore beyond a doubt established the fact of the resurrection of the dead; the fact of His resurrection; establishes also for if Christ was not raised, neither will the dead be raised. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam, all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." (1 Cor. 15:2,-22.)

Paul was certain of the resurrection of Christ, and therefore also certain of the resurrection of the dead. This is not what he is not certain of; this is not what he is aspiring after. He did not need more proofs and evidences concerning the fact of the resurrection of Christ and of the dead, for of these he was thoroughly convinced.

2. When he says, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," he means a special resurrection.

There are those all around who believe that there is a day coming when all the dead will be raised at once, and at the same time. We hear much said about a general resurrection. It is a frequent occurrence that some preacher will read out of some burial manual; at a funeral— "They shall come forth at the general resurrection." But the truth of the matter is, the Scriptures know nothing, and say nothing about a general resurrection. There is a day, but not of twenty-four hours; but a day of one thousand years in which no doubt all the dead will be raised; but not at the same time. Some will be raised at the beginning and some will be raised at the end of this day. (Rev. 20:4-6.) The Scriptures at least nowhere contradict this. Already the prophet Daniel speaks of a resurrection with at least two results; which shall take place in the "time of the end," saying, "and many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan. 12:2-4) But Daniel does not state that these two classes are raised at the same time. In John 5:24-25, Christ speaks of a spiritual resurrection; for says He, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." So then those that hear His Word are at present raised from their state of death in sin, and brought over into life through Christ. "For you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1) This hour now is; and has been for the last nineteen hundred years, or ever since Christ was here in the flesh.

But Christ also speaks of a future bodily resurrection in John 5:28-29; with a two-fold result, saying, "Marvel not at this, (when I speak to you of a present spiritual resurrection), for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and

they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Paul also affirms before Felix that there is a resurrection of the dead; both of the just and unjust. (Acts 24:14-15) These scriptures emphatically declare the resurrection of the dead both just and unjust; but they do not teach that they are raised at the same time. The resurrection is positively universal; but not essentially, nor possibly general. Every person that ever lived will come forth some time, but not at the same time. In the parable of the ambitious guest; Christ taught, "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." (Lu. 14:13) And why this? Because, "they cannot recompense thee" by calling thee to a feast in return as a reward, (Lu. 14:14; and thou shalt be blessed." (Lu. 14:14; and thus, "Thou shalt be blessed." (14:14) And why thus blessed? "For thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." (Lu. 14:14) Here there is no reference made at all to the resurrection of the wicked. Jesus reply to the Sadducees, in reference to their question relative to the woman who had seven brethren as her husbands. "Therefore in the resurrection, whose wife of them is she?"; was, "The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage." (Lu. 20:27-36)

Note the expressions, "accounted worthy," and "the resurrection from the dead," not of the dead.

Those we read of in Heb. 11:35, who might have gone free from being tortured, but did not accept deliverance, had a definite object in view for so doing. And why did they not avoid being tortured, why did they not accept deliverance? Did they do it so they might be saved, or so they might be raised from the dead? Nay; but "that they might obtain a better resurrection." There is something like receiving the salvation of God, and there is something like receiving the salvation of God with eternal glory. (2. Tim. 2:10) Thus we are plainly taught that there is a difference in the resurrections both as to their time and purpose. There are more than one general resurrection. Let us now turn to Paul's great and elucidated treatise on the resurrection, in first Corinthians, fifteen, and see what he so boldly sets forth concerning the same. Here we have first the resurrection of Christ and the dead declared as a fact. (V. V. 20:22) "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Christ is risen, hence all the dead shall be raised.

We have second the divine order of the resurrection. "But every man in his own order." This means that the dead come forth by "bands," "companies" or "regiments," and not all at once and at the same time.

1. "Christ the first fruits." (V.23) That is the first, sample or pledge sheaf out of the field. (Lev. 23:10-11.)

2. "Afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." (V. 23) Here we have a positive distinction; "they that are Christ's at His Coming." We have the divine order more fully given to us concerning these in (1 Thess. 4:14-16). "For if we believe that Jesus died

and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ, (not all the dead), shall rise first." At the rapture all those which "sleep in Jesus" shall come forth; this is the first resurrection. For says John, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years." Rev. 20:6) These are the Bride of Christ, and these only shall attain unto the resurrection from among or out of the dead. No doubt the tried and true Old Testament Saints shall also be raised at this time. For Job declares in glowing language his hope in His kinsman redeemer; saying, "For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job 19: 25 26.) Job looked beyond the power of death and the grave, unto the resurrection of the dead.

Isaiah foretells a two-fold resurrection in Chapter 26-19; which as Scofield says should read, "Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall rise." (i.e., the dead bodies of Jehovah's people). Since the first resurrection; that of the Bride or the "Church of the first born," is unto participation in the kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6), it is evident that these are referred to here in the first place. And since the restoration, exaltation and re-establishment of Israel as a nation is also spoken of as a resurrection (Ezk. 37:1-11), it is evident that this is also referred to by Isaiah. God declares through Hosea concerning His people; "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." (Hos. 13:14) Those referred to in these scriptures undoubtedly are the Old Testament Saints who fell on sleep, in hope of that better and more glorious dispensation; they were taught by the spirit of God to look for. For concerning these the apostle to the Hebrews writes, saying, "and these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise. God having provided some better thing for us, that they with out us should not be made perfect." (Heb. 11:39-40) This scripture plainly teaches that these faithful Old Testament Saints, share the better thing God has provided for us, by virtue of their relation to the Bride of Jesus Christ.

They cannot be the Bride, as this is wholly a New Testament revelation, it being unknown in the Old Testament.

But they no doubt will be the friends of the Bridegroom and share the joys of the coming age with Him and the Bride. (Jno. 3:29). There will also be some tribulation saints raised at the first resurrection. For we read (Rev. 20:4), "and I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them, and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

The first resurrection, translation and rapture take place before the great tribulation; just as Enoch was translated before the flood came. (Heb. 11:5-6; Gen. 5:22-24.)

So these must pass through the tribulation and won't share in the rapture; but will yet share in the first resurrection. They were those who remained true to the testimony of Christ through the reign of the Antichrist; and through the great tribulation, and were thus killed for not worshipping the image of the beast. (Rev. 13:15.) These will possibly be raised when Christ comes with His people to set up His kingdom on the earth. These no doubt will be the friends of the Bride.

The Bride of Christ is a very special class. The friends of the Bridegroom are the Old Testament Saints, who by faith in the coming Messiah remained true to God; fell on sleep, and shall come forth in the first resurrection. The friends of the Bride are those who are alive when Christ comes for His people; who have not proven themselves worthy to belong to the Bride, and are therefore permitted to go through the great tribulation, and there prove themselves true to God by being killed for Christ and the truth's sake; who shall be raised when He comes to set up His Kingdom. These conclude the second band and constitute the first resurrection.

3. The rest of the dead—"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Rev. 20:5.) But after the thousand years are finished, Satan having again been loosed for a little season, and having made His final attempt to lead humanity against God, the great battle of "Gog" and Magog." Satan shall then meet His ultimate doom, by being "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then we read of the last and concluding judgment in the whole list of judgments; and then follows the resurrection of all the dead, to appear at the great white throne of judgment. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged every man according to their works." (Rev. 20.)

"Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (1 Cor. 15:24-26.)

The last enemy death was conquered by Christ when He arose from the dead, and will finally be overwhelmingly defeated by the resurrection of all the dead ; and will ultimately be destroyed by being cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 1:18; Rev. 20.)

Here then we have the record of the last band of the dead coming forth in resurrection. The order of the resurrection then is:

First: "Christ the first fruits."

Second: "They that are Christ's at His Coming," including the Bride, the Old Testament Saints, and the tribulation Saints who were true to God to the point of death during the Anti-Christ reign.

Third: The rest of the dead not included in the first two bands, at the end of the millennium. So then when Paul says: "If by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead," he by no means just refers to the resurrection of the dead. He means the resurrection from among the dead. The cause of the first persecution was the preaching of the resurrection from the dead. (Acts. 4:2.) The Jews like most of our churches today believed in the resurrection of the dead; they were good post millennialists and believed in a general resurrection, but the apostles preached a resurrection from among the dead, which aroused the hatred of the Jews.

2. In the Fact of the First Resurrection Lies the Blessed Hope of the True Church.

(a) We shall then be fully delivered. From this body of humiliation (Phil. 3:20-21); from death (Rev. 20:6) ; from all sorrow (Rev. 21:4) ; from the presence and last traces of sin. (Heb. 9:28.) We shall then be redeemed not only by purchase but also by power.

(b) We shall then meet the Lord and all the redeemed. For "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:17) It is alright to talk about meeting your friends in the hereafter, if you talk about it in the right way. Paul does not make much in this passage of meeting the friends; but of meeting the Lord; for says he, "We shall be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air." The emphasis is laid on meeting the Lord and not on meeting our friends. It will be about in that day, as if we would have a large room and along the sides of the large room and along the side of the room we put a few small lights, and in the centre of the room we put a few large arc lights, and then we light them up. What will be the effect? The effect will be that the large lights will be so bright that you will scarcely take note of the small lights. The glory of being with Jesus will be so grand that it will outshine the glory of being with our friends. We shall then meet the Lord and be with Him forever. They used to meet Him in the days of yore and we can and do meet Him to-day in the assembly and in the study of His Word ; but then we shall meet Him face to face.

(c) We shall then bear His likeness. "But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 Jno. 3:2.) We shall then be glorified together with Him and shall be like Him body, soul and spirit.

(d) We shall then receive our rewards. (2. Cor. 5:10; Lu. 14:14; 2. Tim. 4-8.) We are not rewarded in life, nor at death, but "in that day" when He comes.

3. What Does Paul Mean by this Endeavor?

"If by any means" suggests that not any just ordinary Christian will share in this out resurrection. This is not the lot of every believer.

1. Does Paul doubt his salvation here? Is he afraid that he is not saved? I say, no! He is not here speaking about salvation for that was settled long ago, when on his way to Damascus the Lord spoke to Him, and sent him to Ananias, who laid his hands upon him, and prayed for him where upon the scales fell from his eyes and he was baptized

and received the Holy Ghost. (Acts 9.) Twice afterward he testified to the fact of his salvation as recorded in the book of Acts. (Acts 22 and 26.)

Salvation is of grace and no one need or can add a straws thereto; and to this salvation by grace Paul adds his own personal testimony in (1 Tim. 1: 12-15.) This salvation he had received, but here he speaks of something that needs to be attained to, and he also acknowledges the fact that he has not yet attained thereto. What is he striving after? What is it he has not yet attained to?

2. The prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:12-14.)

He was apprehended for this by Christ Jesus, and he is also desirous of apprehending that for which he is apprehended, (i.e., the prize of the high calling.) And what is the prize of the high calling in Christ? It is the full glory with Christ in the coming age. Our position in the coming kingdom depends upon our faithfulness here. In Isa. 24:21 we read, "That the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth."

Note:

(a) First the host of the high ones on high shall be punished. These are Satan and His angels who now oppose the true Church in heavenly places and who rule the darkness of this world. For, says Paul, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12.) The Church of Christ is not engaged fighting the saloons, gambling dens and houses of ill-fame; but her warfare is against the host of demons who are pressing down upon mankind. The Church is in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6.); where Satan with all His hosts are. Here is where she wages her warfare against spiritual wickedness.

The last conflict in the heavens will take place when the true Church will have been caught up into the air. Then Satan will make a final attempt to overthrow it. But they shall overcome Him "by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony." Then Satan will be cast down from heaven and will carry on His work against God, by mustering all His forces of evil under one head "the Anti-Christ. (Rev. 12.)

(b) Second, the kings of the earth shall be punished. The Kings of Godless Christendom and a Christ rejecting world will be punished when Christ sets up His Kingdom on earth. The kingdom is to be established by power, not persuasion, and is to follow divine judgment upon the Gentile world powers (Ps. 2:4-9; Isa. 9:7; Dan. 2:35-44-45; 9:34-35; Zec. 14:1-19.)

The prize to which Paul refers is this rulership with Christ. He is desirous to rule with Christ on this earth in the next age. Whose shall the future kingdom be? (Dan. 7:18.) "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever." (Dan. 7:22.); "Until the ancient of days come, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." (Dan. 9:27); "and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under

the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." With this agrees the promise of Christ Lu. 12: 32; "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." This compares with (Jude. 1:14-15; 2. Thess. 1:8-10; Rev. 5:10; Ps. 2:8-9; Rev. 2:26-27.)

(c) The saints shall judge angels. Paul writes to the Corinthians and says, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:3.) "The angels which kept not their first estate but left their own habitation," are 'chained under darkness,' awaiting judgment (2.Pet. 2:4; Jude. 6: Jno. 5:22.) These fallen angels who have Satan as their leader shall be judged by the saints. For these everlasting fire is prepared. (Mat. 25:41; Rev. 20:10.) This is what Paul is seeking to attain too. The prize of the "high calling of God in Christ Jesus," is participating with Christ in His rulership in the coming age. At the time Paul wrote this Epistle he frankly admits that he had not as yet attained to this, for says he, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:12-14.)

Did he ever reach the place of full assurance concerning this fact, ere he fell asleep? Did he ever in his life time know that he had attained to this? Yes he did, for listen to his last testimony, just before he was martyred for Christ's sake. "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2 Tim. 4:6-8.) Here there are no regrets, but all is full of hope and assurance.

If every believer in Christ shares this first resurrection and rulership with Christ, why strive to attain there unto? Why this earnest and strenuous endeavor on Paul's part? "If by any means;" if it is at all possible at any cost or sacrifice for me to attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

But says some one, 1 Thess. 4:16, declares, "and the dead in Christ shall rise first" so every believer will be raised at His Coming for His own. But I fear that some do not fully apprehend what Paul means here when he speaks about those in Christ.

Note:

1. This was a model Church. These were sample believers. For says Paul to them, "ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything." (1 Thess. 1:7-8.) Their faith was of such a clear, strong type that no preaching was necessary in Macedonia and Achaia. There was no need of sending a notice to the Macedonia News,

or the Achaia Herald, if there were such papers at this time, stating that 25 or 50 people were converted in a revival service at Thessalonica; for their lives did all the advertising necessary.

Again in 1 Thess. 2:14, Paul says; "For ye, brethren, became followers of the Churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus; for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews," and again in 1 Thess. 3:3-4 he says, "That no man should be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation even as it came to pass, and ye know." These Thessalonian Christians were true to Christ even to the point of suffering. What are the conditions to reigning with Christ? "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." (2. Tim. 2:12.)

Well, did these Thessalonians ever receive the evidence that they should belong to this class? Most assuredly they did, for Paul writes to them saving, "So that we ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure. Which is a manifest token of the righteous "judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which also suffer." (2 Thess. 1:4-5.) So then, if you compare an ordinary believer in Christ, with these Thessalonians you make an unfair and unscriptural comparison. They were an altogether exceptional Church.

2. That the phrase "in Christ" in 1 Thess. 4:16, refers to the body of Christ, all of whom are called and faithful. This does not necessarily mean all those who are saved. The Apostle tells us in Eph. 5 :24, "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" Notice, Paul does not say that the Church should be subject unto Christ, but, "as the church is subject unto Christ." There can be no doubt to this, that all who belong to the Church of Christ are subject to Christ, they obey His word and submit to Him.

There were some saved before this age that do not belong to the Church, there will be some saved after this age that won't belong to the Church, and why could there not be some saved during this age that won't belong to the church? You say, will there be some people saved alter this age? We answer, certainly there will be. You say, can there be any who are saved and not belong to the church? We say there can be. For we read in Rev. 20:15, "and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire," which gives us to understand there must be some even at the final judgment, that of the great white throne, whose names were found written in the book of life. These are possibly such who did not share the first resurrection and yet had life from God. Such who were not counted worthy of the kingdom of God and yet were saved.

These "in Christ," the body of Christ, probably are the "man child" of Revelation 12; or the Church with in the churches. For there is yet a true church of Jesus Christ in the

midst of all this apostasy and confusion. There is a divine invisible church among the churches, or, "the church of the first born and general assembly." (Heb. 12:23.)

3. The Scriptures everywhere make a noted distinction between salvation and rewards.

Eternal life is a free gift from God to us. (Rom. 6:23.) Salvation is all of grace and none of works. (Eph. 2:8; Tit. 3:5.) But rewards are for service rendered and sacrifice made. The condition to sitting on His throne is overcoming as He also overcame. (Rev. 3:21.) The condition to reigning with Him is to suffer. (2 Tim. 2:12.)

We read of some who will be "ashamed before Him at His Coming." (1 Jno. 2:28); and of some who will only be called to the marriage supper of the lamb (Rev. 19:7-9); of others whose works will all be burnt up by the testing fires of judgment, who will themselves be saved only so as by fire (1 Cor. 3); and still others whose reward will not be full (3 Jno. 8). If we want to be crowned "in that day" we must not only strive, but we "must strive lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). The cause for which we strive must be the cause He espouses, the armor must be supplied by Him, and the entire warfare must be carried on under His directions, or according to His word.

4. Those that are with Him when He comes as "Lord of Lords and King of kings," to wage war against the Godless kings of earth, "are called, and chosen, and faithful." (Rev. 17:14) Those who are counted worthy to share the glory of ruling with Him in the coming age must now be tested, tried, proven and found faithful. (1 Pet. 4:17.)

As there is a difference naturally between birth and marriage, so there is a difference spiritually between salvation and Brideship. There is a difference between grace and election, for, "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth." (James 1:18); but now as those who are saved by grace, we shall "make our calling and election sure." (2 Pet. 1:10-11)

In short it takes character to enjoy the full glory with Christ in the coming age. And when I speak about character, I mean Christian character, not what a man is in himself but what he is in and through Christ will determine His real worth then.

4. What does this all mean?

It means:

1. A battle to fight and to overcome. (2 Tim. 4:7; Rev. 3:21; 1 Tim. 6:12) We must "fight the/good fight of faith" and come off victors if we would enjoy this rulership in the next age. And what does this mean? It means that we must fight to lift up the truth of God, in testimony and life, in word and deed. We must lift it up no matter what others do, no matter what it cost us, and no matter what we must suffer for so doing. We must get there where we live as the word of God enjoins us to live, no matter if all the others live contrary, and if we have no preachers to preach at us all the time. We dare not drift with the tide, but we must take our stand on the side of right and the truth, and if they call us narrow minded irrational fools.

2. A course to finish. "I have finished my course," said Paul at the close of his life. (2 Tim. 4:7) It is not ours to go the way of our own choosing, or to live an haphazard life. God has a plan of our life mapped out for us. God has a life work ordained for us. Each one has a divine mission to fulfill, a divinely appointed place to fill, and a divinely ordered path to tread. It is not enough to end our course, for all do this, but we must "finish our course." It means to fulfill our mission, to faithfully fill our place, and to fulfill our divinely entrusted ministry, therefore Paul's earnest endeavor.

This to him meant:

(a) A concentration of all his efforts. For says he, "this one thing I do." (Phil. 3:13) One thing well done is much done. We need to engage all our powers to serve God aright. We have no time to trifle and no strength to waste. All our powers need to be focused on this the one all important thing of our life.

(b) A persevering against all obstacles--"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14) This literally means, "I elbow my way through," and suggests the idea of being on a crowded thoroughfare. We are on a very crowded thoroughfare in a spiritual sense. We have all the hellish deceptive forces of the evil one, all the forces of an evil world, and the deceitful forces of the cold nominal church to brave. The tide is high and the current is swift that is against us, and we dare not go with the tide lest we miss the prize. We must brave the current, and stem the tide, and with a strong, true and brave heart with determined perseverance, press right on in spite of opposing elements.

(c) A forgetting of all the things behind. (Phil. 3:13) Paul undoubtedly meant those good things which he left and forsook for Christ. (Phil. 3:4-6)

To remember these all the time would be a hindrance to him, they would become a snare and a temptation to him, and would retard his progress. To look back may create a desire to be back. He is determined to keep his eye on the goal, and his affections on his heavenly treasure.

(d) A firm gait in pursuing his course (Phil. 3:13) "Reaching forth unto those things which are before." This suggests the figure of a racer on the track trying to win a race. It is not in the fast stepping- where the greatest speed is realized, but in taking a long steady step, Paul wants to cover much ground in one step, he wants to take in new land every day.

3. A faith to keep. (2. Tim. 4:7) "I have kept the faith." "The faith" is the thing believed, and the belief of the thing. It has nothing to do with feeling whatever. Faith is based on evidence and revelation and not on feeling. Paul does not say, "I have kept the feeling," but, "I have kept the faith." He means to say, I have preached and lived the principles of God's word unto my end. The promise to those who keep the "word of His patience" is, "I also will keep you from the hour of temptation, which is to come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." (Rev. 3:10.)

4. To suffer for and with Christ— (Rom. 8:17; 2 Tim. 2:12; Phil. 3:10). "If we suffer, we shall reign." "We shall be glorified together, if so be, that we suffer with Him." "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death," was Paul's great longing of heart. He did not want to die a natural death, he was desirous to die like His Master, a martyr. And why this? "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead." His desire and ambition was to share in the first resurrection, and to participate in the glories of the coming kingdom.

In the light of all this, what can the careless, half-hearted and indifferent expect?

To live in the atmosphere of Philippians three is to live on holy ground. It is worthwhile to live and suffer for Christ. May God bless this simple message to every reader. Amen.