

PAUL ... who wrote the shortest life-story of Christ
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(PHILIPPIANS 2: 5-13)

Paul was an expert at expressing much in little. His epistles encompassed eternal doctrines ; his vision spanned untold periods of time; and through the medium of one sentence, the Christian philosopher expressed the heart of God. He was expert in the art of conciseness, but the Epistle to the Philippians presents his greatest masterpiece. Within the short space of six verses he wrote the life-story of the Son of God. Theologians of all ages have expanded and enlarged that original effort ; the libraries of a world are filled with books illustrating the essay ; the teachers of all Churches preach series of exhausting sermons about these striking texts. Yet long ago Paul sat quietly on his bench in a Roman prison, and with an ease so characteristic of the man, he expressed the inexpressible in 118 words. It was the shortest and greatest biography ever written.

A Glorious Christ

" Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God." One translation of the original text supplies food for thought. " Deity was not a thing to be grasped at." Since He already possessed it, there was no need to covet it. He was in the form of God, and to possess and claim the attributes of the Godhead was not an unlawful exercise. These were His by right. "And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever " (Heb. 1: 7, 8). Thus, even as He claimed, He was there in the beginning with God. In His immortal prayer Jesus said, " And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was " (John 17: 5). Paul sat on his bench and clearly saw the unrivalled splendor of those ancient times.

A Grievous Cross

" But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Perhaps at this juncture Paul paused and remembered his other brilliant effort at conciseness-" For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Christ went to our cross that we might go to His heaven. He introduced eternal wealth into human poverty, that our unlimited limitations might be obliterated by His sufficiency. " . . . even the death of the cross." Immeasurable need challenged immortal love ; and in the ensuing conflict, love triumphed.

A Glad Coronation

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow. . . ." The homegoing of the Saviour begged description. All heaven awaited His coming, and when God said, " Sit on my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," all the sons of God sang together for joy. The eternal Son was home again! Once in the end of the age He had appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Acclaimed by highest heaven, He sat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where God crowned

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Him with glory and honor.

A Great Confession

Paul paused, and allowed his thoughts to race ahead through the years. This is the prerogative of all seers. Time and distance are meaningless to all who have looked into the face of God. Paul saw the end, the ultimate triumph ; and once again his pen moved on the parchment. "And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Paul and John were brothers indeed, for when the beloved disciple similarly witnessed the final triumph, he said, " And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS " (Rev. 19:16). Evil may win occasional battles, but the ultimate triumph rests with God.

A Gracious Command

We must remember that this short life-story was written so that we could emulate Christ's example. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. . . And when Paul had finished his biographical sketch, he urged the Philippians to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. What God in grace has wrought in our hearts, we must work out in daily practice. The path to the cross leads also to the throne ; but if we would reach the goal we must never turn back.

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