

Christian Warfare — Ephesians 6

—A. E. Bouter

The Epistle to the Ephesians unveils God's eternal purpose to us Christians. In it the apostle Paul describes our position before God and our relationship with Him. He shows us to be:

- Accepted in the Beloved,
- Seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus,
- Sons of God (by adoption) for the satisfaction of God's own heart.

Then he puts us, as it were, with both feet on the ground, and teaches us how to put this marvelous truth of the heavenly calling into practice. The truth of this calling needs to be practically worked out in different situations, whether among the saints, or in marriage and in the home, or in this world (without us being of this world). Finally Paul closes his letter by showing the conflict we will have when, both in our hearts and in our walk, we will promote this heavenly call with all its privileges. A simple outline of this Epistle may help us:

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|----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Passage:</i> | Eph. 1-3 | Eph. 4-6:9 | Eph. 6:10-24 |
| <i>Relationship:</i> | sons | saints | soldiers |
| <i>Key-word:</i> | "seated" | "walk" | "stand firm" |
| <i>Function:</i> | position | practice/walk | conflict/warfare |
| <i>Christ / us:</i> | we in Christ | Christ in us | Christ with us |
| <i>Prayer:</i> | Paul's 1 st prayer | Paul's 2 nd prayer | The soldier's prayer |

The Character of the Conflict

In our Christian walk, we will be confronted with many conflicts of various character.¹ To face these, we need to understand the special nature of the Christian warfare as described in Ephesians 6, and to appreciate the resources which God makes available to us. This chapter, describing the Christian warfare, must be read in the context of the entire Epistle. It presupposes that we already have learned and put into practice the lessons linked with leaving this world (of which Egypt is a type) behind as a system independent from God. It also takes for granted that we know to be no longer in bondage to the old master (sin), but that we have placed ourselves under a new Master, Christ (cf. Rom. 5-8). Furthermore, Ephesians 6 does neither speak of the lessons we learn during our walk in this world, which to us is a wilderness (cf. Dt. 8), nor of the efforts needed to take possession of our Christian blessings (of which the "promised land" is a type).

The Epistle to the Ephesians sees the enemy as being opposed to our entering the heavenly land and taking possession of its blessings (illustrated in the book of Joshua). More than that, it shows the warfare we as Christians have to fight after this conquest, in order to (continue to) enjoy all the blessings of the heavenly land where Christ is, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9). Our reason for suggesting this is Paul's remark, "having accomplished all things" (Eph. 6:13). After all

¹ As 1 Corinthians 10:1-13 explains, the history of Israel illustrates of these different conflicts. We encourage you to study this topic in depth, to understand the character of the conflict of Ephesians 6. Let's learn to distinguish between:

- the power of God, or our own strength;
- a battle to attack the enemy, or one to defend ourselves because of his attacks;
- a conflict caused by sin in us, or a conflict caused by the enemy from outside;
- when to resist the enemy, or when to flee from him;
- warfare during the wilderness journey, or warfare in the promised land;
- a battle because of a good spiritual condition, or one caused by a bad spiritual condition;
- a battle on individual level, or one on a collective level;
- a struggle for earthly, or one for heavenly blessings.

Exodus 14 and 17; Numbers 1-10 and 21 and 31; Joshua 1-18 and many other Scriptures, provide examples in these areas.

the conflicts connected with entering, taking possession of, and inheriting the land, we still have warfare. Why is this? Once we have taken possession of our inheritance, the enemy will come back seeking to stop us from enjoying our heavenly blessings altogether. This kind of conflict is illustrated in various ways in the book of Judges and other books following Joshua. The victories of David's heroes (2 Sam. 23), and the way Naboth insisted to keep his inheritance in God's country (1 Ki. 21), provide us, although in type, examples of the conflicts with the enemy, portrayed in Ephesians 6. (See also Dan. 10, 2 Ki. 6:16-17 — Elisha's servant — and 2 Chr. 18).

Identifying the Enemy

At the cross, our Lord had a tremendous victory over Satan (Eph. 4:8-10; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14). Still, Satan's opposition continues. He is the adversary of God's people and is present even in the heavenly places (heavenlies). He reigns as "the prince of this world" and exerts great influence as "the god of this age." Therefore, it is our God and Father's delight to have sons for Himself, who — although living in the world that rejected Christ but no longer belonging to it — already enjoy all the spiritual blessings, which Christ shares with them. This causes Satan to mobilize all his forces against them, because he doesn't want anybody on his territory (which he usurped since the fall) to worship the Father in Spirit and in truth.

By reading Ephesians 6:12 and 4:14, we may understand that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against powers that are in the invisible world (see also 2 Cor. 10:4; Acts 5:3; 16:16-18; Dan. 10). The Lord wants us to look beyond the visible world around us, that we may have a real sense of what happens in the invisible world. We should neither underestimate, nor overestimate our enemy. Ephesians 6:12 gives a four-point summary of Satan's empire describing the sphere of the conflict: "against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual *power* of wickedness in the heavenlies." But let us remember the Lord's promise that the gates of Hades would not prevail against His Assembly (Mt. 16:18; cf. 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:3; 12:7-9; the subtle enemy's attacks have been exposed in the writings of the New Testament).

Living in an Evil Day

In a sense the whole present period of Christ's absence is an evil day for believers. Nevertheless, this expression "evil day" in Ephesians 6:13 refers to situations or circumstances in which we Christians are exposed to the enemy's special attacks relating to our enjoyment of our heavenly portion. However, the Lord gives us the necessary remedies and resources. First, we need the complete, or full armour of God. If only one part is missing, it will reveal a vulnerable spot, and the enemy's attacks will focus on that area. In view of this, we must clothe ourselves with "the whole armour of God," with all its parts, appropriating (making them our own) the different qualities suggested by this symbolic armour. This is essential if we are in actual practice to display God's character and nature. Furthermore, it is a fact that we are especially vulnerable *after* a victory. This point is illustrated in Samson, after his battle against the Philistines (Judg. 15), and in Elijah after his victory over the Baal's priests (1 Ki. 19:1).

Even the Ephesians had to wake up out of their (spiritual) sleep. If this was true for believers in the early history of the Church, how much more for us who live near the end of the day of grace. The enemy doesn't want us to enjoy our marvellous blessings (Eph. 1:3), he doesn't want us to produce fruit for God in our lives and in our worship. Therefore, if we really derive spiritual enjoyment from our heavenly blessings, the devil is going to target us specifically.

Using God's strength

God's strength appears in the three main parts of this Epistle:

Strength flowing from our position in Christ — God has made us to *sit* down (1:19 – 2:6);

Strength for our walk, according to our calling— we *walk* in love, in light, and in wisdom (4:1-3; 5:1-16; 3:20);

Strength for the conflict in the heavenlies — we *stand*, in order to oppose the enemy and to fight (6:10-18).

John 15:5 shows that we have no strength in ourselves — none whatsoever. Our strength is only in God and in the Lord (cf. Phil. 4:13). When we are opposed by the enemy Ephesians 6:10 directs us to the power of the Lord, because in the battle Christ, gave glory and honour to God. We can be overcomers in His strength (2 Cor. 12:9). Old Testament examples of this we see in Judges 6:12-15: "Go in this thy might," and 1 Samuel 14:6: "For there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few."

Do we realize that God's righteousness and salvation (Isa. 59:17) are our resources in the battle against the enemy? God is clothed in majesty and girded by power (Ps. 93). In a similar way, we should be characterized by the use of these resources in the conflict with Satan, as Romans 13:12 and 14, and 1 Thessalonians 4:8 show us.

As Christians we are clothed with "the new man" (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). In the measure in which we realize this practically, "putting on the new man," thus using our armour, we will be able to be successfully engaged in this conflict.

Following the Example of our Lord

The life of our Lord Jesus on this earth provides abundant illustrations of the seven parts of the armour of God. Let's consider the last one only: the warrior's prayer. God made His strength available to Christ, because our Lord Jesus moved in complete dependence upon God, in total obedience and in perfect communion with Him. In Luke's Gospel we read seven times about His being in prayer before He prayed in Gethsemane. In Luke 4:1-12 we see Christ as our Model in spiritual warfare in three ways: in His dependence on God, in His total obedience, and with His complete confidence.

If we follow our perfect Model and walk in close communion with Him, He will enable us to be overcomers. Marvelous Lord, precious Model: What privilege it is for us to be able to follow Him, as long as we are clothed with the full armour of God!

Summary of the Armour of God in Ephesians 6:14-18

1. Girdle — "having girt about your loins with the truth";
2. Breastplate — "having put on the breastplate of righteousness";
3. Shoes — "shod your feet with *the* preparation of the glad tidings of peace";
4. Shield — "besides all *these*, having taken the shield of faith with which ye will be able to quench all the inflamed darts of the wicked one";
5. Helmet — "have also the helmet of salvation";
6. Sword — "the sword of the Spirit, which is God's Word";
7. Prayer — the warrior's character: "praying *at all seasons*, with all prayer and supplication *in the Spirit*, and *watching* unto this very thing *with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints*":
 - When At all times.
 - How By the Spirit.
 - What attitude Watching...with all perseverance and supplications.
 - For whom For all the saints collectively, and for individual believers.

Generally speaking, the armour of God is for defence. Nevertheless, part of the armour is also for attack: the sword of the Spirit (the right word for the right moment, spoken in a right manner), and prayer, which mobilizes the powers of heaven (cf. Dan. 10). In all these things the Lord Jesus is our great Model (in His life on earth), but also our Leader and Head (in His present position, acting through His Spirit *in* us and *through* us).

THE THIRD DAY

—Hugo Bouter

On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord" (2 Kings 20:5)

Hezekiah and the House of the Lord

The house of the Lord held an important place in the life of king Hezekiah. He desired to walk in the ways of the Lord, just like his great forefather David. Therefore he wished to live and act as a righteous king on behalf of God, in complete dependence on His word and will. Hezekiah took care of God's interests, and of His house, the holy temple of the Lord.

This contrasted sharply with the behaviour of his godless father, Ahaz, who took part of the treasures from the house of the Lord, and gave it to the king of Assyria. After this, Ahaz became increasingly unfaithful and even shut up the doors of the temple (2 Chron. 28:21, 24). His god-fearing son, Hezekiah, acted quite differently. In the very first year of his reign, in

the first month, Hezekiah rectified this desecration, and repaired and opened the house of the Lord (2 Chron. 29:3).

This wonderful beginning of his reign was followed by a complete restoration of the house of the Lord, its worship, and everything connected with it. The Passover was celebrated in a unique manner by all Israel, and the land was cleansed from idolatry. It was a time of revival, of spiritual restoration and return to God and His service. Hezekiah was prosperous in all this: "Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart. So he prospered" (2Chr. 31:20-21).

Inside Jerusalem the fear for the downfall of the city was followed by a deadly disease that almost carried Hezekiah off to his grave. Immediately upon this critical period, Hezekiah's behaviour with respect to the house of the Lord quickly reached a turning point — Even pious men may fail when they are put to the test! — For as soon as Sennacherib had conquered the fortified cities of Judah, Hezekiah — would you believe it — used the treasures of the house of the Lord as some kind of redemption money to prevent the king of Assyria from marching any further (2 Kings 18:13-16).

In this way, Hezekiah desecrated the house of the Lord that at first he had first restored. We do not read in this connection that he asked God for advice, nor that he went up to the house of the Lord to pray. He acted independently, and in doing so harmed the interests of God's house. The negative effects were soon felt. Sennacherib did receive the tribute from Hezekiah but still sent a strong army to Jerusalem (although the main force stayed at Lachish). For the time being, he restricted himself to a sort of psychological warfare by means of his marshal. This troubled king Hezekiah so much that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord (2 Kings 19:1).

Hezekiah's prayers

Now that things were at their worst, Hezekiah could not but seek God's face. Yet we do not read here that he prayed himself; he left that to Isaiah. The king asked the prophet to act as mediator and to lift up his prayer for the remnant that was left. We only read about Hezekiah's praying personally after the envoys of Sennacherib had come once more with a threatening letter. Then he became very much involved in the matter and spoke about the LORD *our* God, whereas in the presence of the prophet he had spoken in a more aloof manner about the LORD *your* God (2 Kings 19:4,19).

It is moving to read this prayer of Hezekiah. This is the second time that he went into the house of the Lord. He took the letter from the delegation of the king of Assyria, and spread it before the Lord. Then he made a striking appeal to the Lord, pleading that God Himself maintain His own honour as being the only true God, in contrast to the vain idols of the nations that were only the work of men's hands. His prayer was heard in a wonderful manner. In response the Angel of the Lord destroyed Sennacherib's army so that the only thing this one could do was return "shamefaced" to his own land (2 Chr. 32:21).

However, this answer to his prayers did not yet end Hezekiah's afflictions. It was precisely in those days that he was struck by a deadly disease. On behalf of God, the prophet Isaiah told him that he would die and not live (2 Ki. 20:1). Once more we read that Hezekiah prayed intensely to the Lord. Thereupon he received this comforting answer through the prophet: "I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord" (2 Ki. 20:5).

Of the three times that this story is reported in the Bible, it is only in this section that we read the promise that Hezekiah would again go up to the house of the Lord on *the third day*. This time, he would not go up to the temple to pray and to plead for salvation, but to *thank God for the salvation that had been revealed*. Here we have Hezekiah not as a supplicant but as a worshipper, as he himself puts it in his song of thanksgiving: "The living, the living man, he shall praise You... The Lord was ready to save me; therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life, in the house of the Lord" (Isa. 38:19-20). In this respect there is a parallel with Psalm 116, where the sacrifice of praise is offered to the Lord in His temple in order to thank Him for the salvation that had been obtained from the pains of death.

The third day: the resurrection day

As has been said, Hezekiah was allowed to give thanks to the Lord for his recovery on *the third day*. This is certainly no coincidence, since third day in Scripture is very often connected with life from the dead. It is the day of the resurrection. Christ rose again "the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:4). He was raised because of our justification. And His resurrection from the dead is the basis of our salvation from the power of sin and the bonds of death. Only on this new ground can we burst out into the song of redemption, and offer the sacrifice of praise to our God and Father in His house.

To us Christians the house of God here on earth is not a temple of wood and stone, but a spiritual house. It is the Church of the living God, being built up with living stones. In the midst of the redeemed we offer up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:18-22; 1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5).

In this figurative sense, the promise to go up to the house of the Lord is also applicable to us. "On the *third day*", that is, on the ground of Christ's resurrection from the dead, we too pay homage to our God. We come to Him as made alive together with Christ. We enter the Holiest with our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, and as a holy priesthood we dwell in God's presence. If we approach God in that way, this is really a "going up to the house of the Lord". For our hearts and minds are lifted up to Him, and our songs of praise rise up as sweet-smelling incense before His throne.

In Genesis 1:9-13 we read that on the third day the dry land appeared and the earth began to bring forth fruit. The dry land symbolizes the place of safety from the wrath of God, which can only be reached through death. God Himself has prepared this safe ground for us, and there we are kept from the waters of death, the waters of judgment. We are safe and secure in the risen Christ, and we now belong to a new creation. The dry land is also the place of fruit-bearing. We are to bear fruit to God: the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of a new creation. We also offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips (Rom. 6:22; 7:4; Gal. 5:22; 6:8; Heb. 13:15). So we serve God on this new ground, in separation from the world that is passing away.

In the history of Israel, we see that God's people had to leave Egypt and had to go a three days' journey into the wilderness in order to bring Him their sacrifices (Ex. 8:27).

It was also on the third day that God revealed Himself to Israel on Mount Sinai, and then the people were allowed to approach Him there (Ex. 19:11,16,17).

On the third day, according to Joshua 1:11, Israel crossed the river Jordan, the river of death, following the ark which is a type of Christ.

Many more examples could be cited to illustrate the importance of the third day. Jonah, the prophet, reached the dry land after having been "in the bonds of death" for three days. Queen Esther approached the king on the third day and found favour in his sight. So she was saved from condemnation. In short, the third day is the day of the resurrection, of reaching a place of safety before God, a place where we can bear fruit to Him.

Divine favour, human unfaithfulness

Unfortunately, Hezekiah showed a lack of fruitfulness. It appears that the fruit of the flesh sprang up again. The author of Chronicles says it very clearly: "But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favour shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem" (2 Chr. 32:25). If only he would have gone up to the house of the Lord again and again with a song of praise, he might have been kept from this sin! Regrettably, the house of the Lord no longer held such an important place in his life after his recovery. The delegation from Babylon heard nothing and saw nothing of the house of the Lord, but they did see Hezekiah's *own* house (2 Ki. 20:12-17). Hezekiah became arrogant and sought his own honour rather than the honour of the Lord. Because of that, he no longer acted as a grateful worshipper.

This failure reminds us of what the Bible says about king Solomon after he had completed the construction of the temple in *seven* years: "But Solomon took *thirteen* years to build *his own house*" (1 Ki. 7:1). It also reminds us of the words with which the prophet Haggai reproached the remnant that had returned from the Babylonian exile: "Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?" (Hag. 1:4). Of course there are a lot of good things to say about Hezekiah, about Solomon, and also about the remnant of the people of Israel, but we see in all these three cases that their *own* interests took a greater place than those of the house of the Lord. In this way they did not give God His due. In fact they wronged *His* honour and *His* rights.

We will be kept from this danger by imitating the example of our Lord and Saviour, of whom it is written: "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up" (Ps. 69:9; Jn. 2:17). We will then long for the house of the Lord, in order to thank Him for all His mercies. It will be our desire to dwell in His house for ever. Just like our Lord, we will be found in God's house, because we have to be about our Father's business (Lk. 2:46-49). Our life will be characterized by our going up to the house of the Lord, by beholding the beauty of the Lord, and by inquiring in His temple (Ps. 27:4).

The Book of the Prophet Zechariah (1)

—H. Rosier

Introduction

The Purpose of Prophecy

In beginning an exposition of Zechariah's prophecy, I believe I ought to make a remark directed at those Christians who occupy themselves much with prophecy. Although I express the wish that they will study prophecy more and more, I want to warn them to be on their guard for the danger of doing this to satisfy their curiosity. They who give in to this inclination of the natural heart only are interested in prophecies with a view to coming events, and make that the subject of their studies. This way they will likely gather knowledge, but this will leave their hearts indifferent and cold. They will be kept from suffering shipwreck on that reef once they have understood and properly valued the purpose of prophecy.

Prophecy is in the very first place the revelation of the *power* and the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:16). The disciples were shown these two things in the vision on the holy mountain. There, as a shining picture before their very eyes, unfolded the future glory of Christ in His kingdom, namely His coming to take the governmental reins in hand, and the power with which He will establish His government on earth. This same picture showed them *the heavenly sphere* of that kingdom in which the Lord appeared in glory, speaking with Moses (whom God had resurrected) and with the prophet Elijah, who without dying had been taken up into heaven.

Yet, on the other hand, in revealing the future glory of Christ, the prophets could not remain silent about His *sufferings*, which are the very foundation of His glory. For that reason the apostle Paul wrote that the Spirit, by means of the prophets, testified "before of the sufferings which *belonged* to Christ, and the glories after these" (1 Pet. 1:11). The apostle added to it that they "not to themselves but to you they ministered those things." Future believers, Christians as well as Jews, would share in His *sufferings* and in His *glory*. Therefore we so often find in Peter's first epistle, these two words expressing what the believers from among the Jews would experience. The Christian position is not the subject of the Old-Testament prophecies. Apart from the sufferings and glory of Christ, one would find more those of Israel's remnant, whose experience is so closely linked to that of its Redeemer.

Finally, prophecy has still another, most important, purpose, namely to keep us separated from the *world*. The revelation of who Christ is draws our *hearts* out to Him who has suffered for us, and it causes us to be occupied with His glory. The exposure of the true characteristics of this world speaks to our *consciences* and brings about a separation between us and that which surrounds us, though we are in the world. Seen in this way, prophecy is "as... a lamp shining in an obscure place until *the day dawn* and *the morning star* arise in [our] hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19). If we didn't have this prophetic lamp, we would lose our way and get entangled in the snares that Satan sets before our feet to corrupt us.

These then are the various purposes of prophecy. In addition to this, it keeps the hope regarding the glorious future blessings alive within us.

The Difference Between Haggai and Zechariah

When the Jews had returned to their land after the Babylonian exile, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi served as prophets among them. Although their prophecies had different purposes, Haggai and Zechariah both prophesied during the events described in the early part of the book of Ezra (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). After them served Malachi, whose prophecy dealt with the moral condition of the people reported in the last chapter of the Nehemiah.

Through a decree of Cyrus (whom the prophet Isaiah had announced by name long before — Isa. 44:28), the Jews had returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple of the Lord there. First they had erected the altar, the center of their worship service; afterwards they had with great enthusiasm laid the foundation of the house, at which occasion some had been filled with joy, others, however, with sadness. But soon Ahasuerus had commanded the work to be stopped, and so seventeen years had passed since Cyrus' decree without the temple rising on its foundations.

In the second year of Darius, king of Persia, God raised up Haggai and Zechariah. Their influence gave new courage to the people who immediately resumed the reconstruction. Industrious, Zerubbabel — of royal descent (1 Chr. 3:19) — and Joshua, the high priest, as their heads shared in the work. Four years later the house was complete and the people celebrated joyfully the feast of dedication.

Thereby prophecy had reached its first goal; it had addressed the conscience of the people and inspired them to labour in service of the Lord. But in Scripture prophecy never is limited to its immediate result; it focuses on a future day at the end time. When the prophet Haggai presented the building of the temple to the nation, he did so in view of the day when "the desire of all nations" would enter His house and fill it with His glory (Hag. 2:7). But when Zechariah spoke to the people about Jerusalem, he thought of the day on which Christ's feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, the day when He as Redeemer will appear to His people, while entering the city as King of righteousness.

Despite their common service, these two prophets did not have the same goal in view. Haggai spoke more exclusively about the house.

Zechariah's eye reaches farther. He had as subject the city Jerusalem, the remnant of Judah, and the last day, insofar this related to the Messiah. Moreover he gave a general overview of the kingdoms of the nations and their moral condition in the last days. But he especially drew attention to the sufferings of Christ and the various ways in which His glory will be revealed. During the course of this exposition we will repeatedly return to this subject.

Divisions of the Book

The book Zechariah has several easily recognized divisions. After a short introduction (Ch. 1:1-6) it can be divided into two totally distinctive parts. The first contains the eight visions (Ch. 1:7 to Ch. 6). The second, the book of the oracles, has three subdivisions:

1. "The word of the Lord" to Zechariah about fasting and the restoration of Jerusalem (Ch. 7 & 8),
2. "The burden of the word of Jehovah" about the shepherds and about the restoration, first of Judah and afterward of Israel (Ch. 9-11),
3. "The burden of the word of Jehovah" regarding the last day and the restoration of the land (Ch. 12-14).

We must, however, observe that in the midst of all these pictures unfolding before our eyes, the main theme is ever: Jerusalem and the Messiah.

Reminders of the Past (Chapter 1:1-6)

Name and genealogy of the prophet

"In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of Jehovah unto Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo" (v. 1).

The eighth month gives the time at which Zechariah's introductory words were spoken. Just as Jeremiah, he wore the double character of prophet and priest. Here he is called "Zechariah, the son of Berechiah (of Berechiah), the son of Iddo." What we are told in Matthew 23:35 of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah who, at the command of Joas, was slain between the temple and the altar, clearly refers to Zechariah the son of Jehoiada. This verse has given the expositors of Scripture quite some difficulty. Some think of an error in this portion of Matthew, because there the "son of Berechiah" is confused with the "son of Jehoiadah." According to my modest opinion there is no such error. The names Zechariah and Berechiah were well-known names in the priestly family. In Isaiah 8:2 we find as faithful witnesses of Isaiah: Uriah and Zechariah, the son of Jeberechiah, which is Berechiah. Berechiah seems to have been the name of the head of the family. Matthew could therefore refer to Zechariah, the son of Jehoiadah, also as son of Berechiah, going back to his descend. The same holds true for our prophet. Zechariah was the son of Iddo (Ezra 5:1; 6:14), one of the priests who had come with Joshua the high priest and with Zerubbabel from Babel (Neh. 12:1,4). Under the high-priestly office of Jehoiakim, the son of Joshua, "Zechariah, the son of Iddo" held the priestly office (Neh. 12:16), but only in his own prophecy is Zechariah called the son of Berechiah. This is easily explained if Berechiah was the head of the family.

Similar examples we encounter regularly in the genealogies in the Chronicles. These books run till the time of the return out of captivity and were written in Zechariah's days. (See e.g. Hur, who after five generations is called the son of Judah in 1 Chr. 4:1).

The fact that Zechariah was a priest gives a special character to his prophecy, for the priesthood plays a most important role in it.

Call to Repentance and Conversion

The word of the Lord then came to Zechariah, saying: "*Jehovah hath been very wroth with your fathers. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts: Return unto Me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts.*" (vv. 2-3).

Thus reads the beginning of the book. The Lord makes known to those escaped of Judah that He has been very wroth with their fathers because they had not listened to His prophets. Would these few who remain also fall into the errors of their fathers, or would they now listen to the word of the Lord? Here there is actually no mention of the law, for we ought not to confuse the prophets with the law. Doubtless, the prophets set the law and the testimony before the people so as to make a serious appeal to Israel's conscience during a time of ruin. But simultaneously they brought God's grace and mercy to the attention of the people. Israel had failed, but the Lord could not fail.

Although His judgments had become necessary, He wanted to realize His counsels of grace toward the people. The prophecy does not merely consist of a series of words of the Lord to the guilty people to awaken the conscience and to announce the judgments that would come over them, but it has also as purpose to encourage the heart of the faithful ones by making known to them what God will do for them. "Return unto Me," we read in these verses, "and I will return unto you." That goes much farther than the principle of the law. During the dispensation of grace these words are just as true as they were then, and we too ought to pay them serious attention.

"Return unto Me, and I will return unto you." What have we done with the testimony the Lord has entrusted to us? Is there much difference between our decline and that of Judah's fathers? Did we keep what God has given in our hands? There is no doubt about the answer. Did we labour on the house of the Lord, or have we built our own houses, the thing of which Haggai accused the nation? Alas, just like those who had returned from Babel, so we have sought to make ourselves comfortable in the world. What are we to do now? Return unto Him! The way is open. Is it then entirely impossible to judge ourselves and to take up again that of which we should never have let go? If we heed this call we will receive a reward; "I will return unto you, says Jehovah of hosts." If the search for our own interests has caused us to lose fellowship with the Lord, it is essential that we seek it again. If, due to our failure to look after the Lord's interests our hearts have become dry through the world's influence; if we have given entrance to "idols," then let us judge our ways and return unto Him. Then He will return unto us and we will once again enjoy the riches we did despise. They certainly have not been lost. Only through repentance will we once again experience the enjoyment of these blessings. For many years Israel had left the house incomplete; it had concerned itself about entirely different things than the Lord's presence in His house. He pointed them to the example of their fathers: "*They turned and said, Like as Jehovah of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us*" (v. 6) They had repented, but only after God's judgments had come over them. Would the remnant now follow the same path as long as He delayed His judgment?

This question holds true for us as well. When we don't listen to God's warnings, He must chastise us. May we realize how important the beginning of this chapter is *for our souls*.

The Difference with Malachi

The Book of Malachi begins entirely different than that of Zechariah. Instead of "return unto Me," God says to His people through Malachi: "I have loved you." That is a stirring word; it should have caused the deepest strings of their soul to vibrate. It drew, however, only complaints from their cold hearts. "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" (Mal. 1:2). Every question they directed to Him showed anew how hardened they were. Nine questions are recorded in Malachi, twelve in the first part of Zechariah, but the latter were asked by the prophet himself. They gave expression to his faith and his dependence upon the Lord. Although priest and prophet, Zechariah felt how ignorant and unfit he himself was to fathom God's thoughts. He had only one desire: to receive a direct explanation of the divine mysteries. Let us copy Zechariah in this and ask as he did. If we do, we will receive just as he did. Such dependence we need especially when we begin our look into the visions of the prophet. One who wants to understand them with his intellect will find himself facing insurmountable difficulties. But one who in humble dependence asks God: "What does this mean?" will receive an answer that will build up and strengthen his faith, especially if he first has taken to heart that other word: "Return unto Me, then I will return unto you."

The Impeccable Christ (2)

—S. Hulshizer

Review of Philippians Chapter Two

It is not uncommon for erroneous doctrine to confine itself to one verse, or a few isolated references. This is nowhere more true than in the Kenosis theory. For this very reason we will review the setting in which its key reference (Phil. 2:7) is located.

Before proceeding with this review, there is a principle that should be noted. It has been wisely stated, "For anyone to pick out certain statements in that tradition which emphasizes the humanity of Jesus and on the basis of those, to represent Him as merely human, is as erroneous as to pick out certain other statements which emphasize His Divinity and to represent Him as purely Divine."²

It is not the purpose of this study to gather all the texts that prove the Deity of Christ and to submit them to those claiming Christ could have sinned. Hence there will be little reference to such texts.

Philippians presents Christ as the believer's joy of living. The following is one possible outline of the Epistle:³

- Chapter One — The Christian's Aim (v. 21)
- Chapter Two — The Christian's Attitude (v. 5)
- Chapter Three — The Christian's Appetite (v. 10)
- Chapter Four — The Christian's Ability (v. 11)

In Philippians, the mind, or attitude is mentioned a significant number of times (12). The central theme of the second chapter is, *what should the mind, or attitude of the Christian be?* The primary attitude is to be one of unselfishness as stated in verses 2 to 4.

Paul goes on to present the attitude of Christ Jesus. He was in His very essence God, and as such it was His right to be glorified. However, He divested Himself of this right, and took upon Himself a form in which His glory was hidden. Paul was thus saying, "Do not seek vain glory at the expense of other's welfare, but have the same attitude as Christ, who was even willing to cover His rightful glory for the sake of others." The apostle then presented three additional examples. Paul himself was "poured out" for them (v. 17). Timothy is then seen as one who seeks, not his own interest, but the interest of others (vv. 19-20). Lastly, Epaphroditus was also concerned about others (v. 26).

It is interesting to see how the apostle uses the various forms of the verb *kenos*, "empty" throughout the chapter. In verse 3, he speaks of vain or "empty" glory (*kenodoxia*) and follows this by the example of Christ who "emptied" (*kenoo*) Himself (v. 7). In verse 16 Paul speaks of running in "vain" (*kenos*). This is followed by Paul's being "poured out" in verse 17. Great stress has been laid on the literal translation of "emptied" by those advocating the Kenosis doctrine, and yet little, or nothing is said about Paul being "poured out." Did Paul cease to be Paul after pouring himself out? Did he give up his abilities, or apostleship, in doing so? It can be seen that the apostle's use of the word *kenoo* meaning "emptied" in verse 7, is just as figurative as "poured out" (*spendomai*) in verse 17. The passage in no way supports the divesting of Christ's divine attributes, but rather His divine prerogative and right to be glorified. John 17:5 also supports this. The form of the word *being* in verse 6 does not convey the thought that His "being in the form of God" was a *past* fact, but that *He is, and always will be*, in the form of God. This is just another proof that His emptying was not of His divine attributes. He did not cease to be fully God when He took on the form of a servant. We do not empty something by adding to it. Christ was not diminished Deity added to a human personality, but the true and personal God having taken on humanity. Herein is the mystery (1 Tim. 3:16).

Likeness of Men

Verse 7 also states that He was made in the *likeness* of men. Here the Holy Spirit leads Paul to use the word *homoionta*, meaning "resemblance." Christ was like men in that He was true humanity, but He was *more*, in that He also possessed the Divine nature. The same original word is used in Romans 8:1 Notice that He is *not* here referred to as the "express image" of man, as He is in Hebrews 1:3. "Who [Christ] being the brightness of His glory and the *express image* of His [God's]

² Loraine Boettner, *Studies in Theology*, Nutley, New Jersey: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, p. 200.

³ Stephen Hulshizer, *Guidelines for Christian Service, Commentary on Philippians*, Sunbury, PA; Believers Bookshelf, 1987, p. 10.

person..." Christ was not the exact copy of man, but only his likeness (see Jn. 9:8-9) for another example of the word *like*.

Glory-Humiliation-Glory

The sequence of glory, humiliation, and glory, is beautifully illustrated at the last supper as recorded in John 13:1-17. Here the Master lays aside His outer garments, and proceeds to take the place of humiliation, that of washing the disciple's feet. After the work is complete, He again takes up His outer garments. The sequence parallels that of Philippians 2:6-11. Note that in verse 14 of John 13 He never ceased to be the Master during the period of humiliation. It was a question of *position*, not *possession*.

Hidden Glory

The Scripture often presents God as "light" (1 Jn. 1:5; 1 Tim. 6:16; Hab. 3:4; Acts 9:3; Jn. 1:7-8; 3:19; 8:12; Rev. 1:14; Ex. 34:29; Heb. 1:3; Lk. 2:9). Since sinful man could not exist in the presence of the divine Light, it was necessary that God's glory not shine forth in all its radiance when He was manifested in the flesh (Heb. 1:2). This was marvelously accomplished, not by extinguishing it, but by containing it within the veil of Christ's holy humanity (Heb. 10:20). However, the Light was sufficiently manifested to expose the deeds of man (Jn. 3:21). Nowhere was this inner glory more evident than on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt. 7:12; 2 Pet. 1:16-17).

Summary

In summary, it is evident that Philippians 2 does not present a diminished God, but rather the remarkable example of the proper Christian attitude, that of Christ's willingness to leave His rightful position of glory in order to redeem lost men at the awful cost of the cross. Certainly, no one less than God could reveal God or be a perfect expression of Him. Christ as the "Word" was God in the flesh, and the perfect "Expression" of Him. However, we rejoice today that He has returned to that position of glory, and we gladly bow the knee and own Him as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

To be cont'd

Observations

Abraham had Four Altars:

The first when God told him 'Unto thy seed I will give this land,
The second on the east of Bethel, where he called on the name of Jehovah,
The third at the oaks of Mamre which are in Hebron,
The fourth in the land of Moriah, where he sacrificed his son.

Isaac had Four Wells:

The first in the valley he called Esek (Quarrel),
The second he called Sitnah (Opposition),
The third he called Rehoboth (Broadways),
The fourth he called Shebah (Oath).

Jacob had Four Pillars:

The first at Bethel after he had seen the vision,
The second he called Galeed and Mizpah (Heap of Witness and Watch-tower),
The third at Bethel upon his return there,
The fourth upon Rachel's grave.

Joseph had Four Garments:

The first a vest of many garments given by his father,
The second he left with Potiphar's wife when he fled from her,
The third garment he received upon leaving prison,
The fourth, which he received from Pharaoh, was garment of byssus.