

Paul's Characteristics as a Christian.

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Surely, since the Saviour ascended from Mount Olivet, no finer type of the Christian character has been seen.

1. He was humble—no man more humble than he. He confessed himself to be the least of all the Apostles, unworthy, indeed, to be called an Apostle because he persecuted the Church of Christ. It may be truly said of Paul that, when he thought of Christ, self passed in music out of sight. If it may be said of any one it may be said of him that he won the blessing spoken of by Christ in the words: "Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."

2. Paul's life was a life of consecration. This is one of its most striking features, as revealed in the narrative of Luke and in Paul's letters. We hear much of consecration in these days. We hear much of Christian heroism; but there has never been greater consecration than that shown by Paul; there has never been greater heroism than his.

What a picture he gives in his letter to the Corinthians of his sufferings, his perils, his weariness and painfulness, his watchings often, his hunger and thirst, his fastings often, his cold and nakedness.

And besides all the things that were without there came upon him the care of all the Churches. What an example Paul is to us ministers in consecration and service! I do not know what may be the case with other professions; but I am certain that, in our profession, the hardest toil is the lightest in the end. I do not know what may be the case in other professions, but I am sure that, in ours, for every spiritual gift we are enabled to give we receive at least ten-fold in return.

3. The unseen world was very real to Paul. Eternal life was a present possession with him. It was more precious, far more precious to him than the material world around him. That was a mere passing shadow to Paul while the spiritual world was the reality. The material world was merely a tent, whose folds would soon be blown away, revealing all the more clearly the stars of the eternal world.

Thus Paul looked to the things which are unseen rather than toward the things which are seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

4. And the crowning feature of Paul's life was its calmness. In this his inner life was in striking contrast with the outer life. In the outer life, as we have seen, were perils, sorrows, anxieties, worries. In the inner life there was peace. I do not mean that, in Paul's inner life there was the absence of conflict; but it was conflict with sin and not with doubt. His spiritual life was calm because his faith and hope were assured. In this again, Paul's life has a message of unspeakable value to all ministers of the Gospel. For we live in times of unrest in matters of faith when we are continually called upon to adopt some new theory in matters of religion or to meet some new objection of scepticism. This unrest, where it is yielded to, militates greatly against the Christian minister's hopes of success. Cannot we learn the secret of Paul's calmness in the spiritual life? Paul evidently was quite familiar with the currents of unbelief existing in his time. His address at Athens shows that he was quite familiar with the teachings of the stoic and epicurean principles which really underlie the main currents of scepticism to-day, the pantheism, the agnosticism, the atheism, the materialism which are merely phases of these old systems of thought. Paul never for a moment, yields to the currents of sceptical thought around him. And I think the reason is because his spiritual faith was so real that they had no influence upon him whatever. As the exquisite scenery of Asia Minor had no effect upon his aesthetic temperament, so intent was he in gazing upon the beauty of the spiritual world revealed to him by Christ, so he was blind to all the allurments of sceptical thought because of the intense reality of his spiritual experience, God the Father was so real to him; Christ was so real to him; his own spiritual life was so real to him that the scepticism of the Gentile world could not reach the citadel of his faith. Paul did not deny the use of reason in religion. There is no more rational

theologian than he. He accepts his religion because it appeals to the deepest needs of his nature. Having done that and felt the reality of spiritual experience, he will allow no sceptical thoughts to trouble him. It seems to me that this is the true line of apologetics for the Christian minister—the apologetics of Christian experience. One very interesting writer on the Christian life says that she found relief from scepticism by pledging herself never to doubt again. This action was, apparently illogical; yet if we study her motive carefully, we will find that her reasoning was thoroughly logical.

Life is so full of mysteries that, if we turn aside to study every ephemeral sceptical theory, our faith will, assuredly, be weakened.

Divine Sonship.*

BY REV. ADDISON P. FOSTER, D.D.

THE DIVINE SONSHIP OF MAN.

A man's beliefs are of the first importance. "As a man thinketh so is he." "Wisdom is more precious than rubies." Consequently Christ desires us to abide in His word. By this He means that we are to be surrounded by the truth as by the air we breathe. We are to live in it and be pervaded by it.

When we are thus possessed with the truth, what then? Why, we are Christ's disciples. We then readily receive the truth into our hearts and are shaped by it. Divine truth can only be understood by living in it. We must do Christ's will to know of his teaching. The truth is the great instrumentality in Christianity. It is the sword of the Spirit. It is the one weapon available to every Christian, by which the world is to be conquered by Christ. It is like leaven, having a vitality of its own and, wherever introduced, producing a change in hearts and lives. Christ specifies two things which it effects. *It makes us free.* "The truth shall make you free." The Jews were inclined to resent this statement. They were not slaves, they said, and never had been. But, said Christ, "He that sins becomes the slave of sin." They were the slaves of sin and needed the truth as taught by Christ to set them free. The truth makes plain the laws of life, shows us the wisdom of those laws, makes us glad to conform to them and thus breaks the shackles of compulsion. But the truth not only makes us free, *it gives us sonship.* The slave is subject to the will of another and may be sent away at any moment. The slave of sin is under liability. He has no hold upon the present. A dread future, nothing less than banishment from the presence of God, lies before him. But with one who is free it is different. A son and not a slave can enjoy the privileges of a home without fear of losing them. Christ is such a son in a pre-eminent sense, and, as He frees us through His truth, to such a sonship He introduces us. No longer slaves in God's house, but sons, all the privileges of life in God's kingdom become ours forever.

So much for the way sonship is brought about; how is it manifested? Sonship, says Christ, is evinced by sympathy and co-operation with one's father. The relation of father and son is most intimate and tender. The son has the father's life, shares his aims, enters into his interests, joins in his work. This was peculiarly true in Christ's time when sons lived with their father, carried on their work in common, and shared the results of labor with him without dividing the property. All this is true in the religious life. Christ illustrated it in His own person. He spoke the things He had seen with His Father. The Jews unconsciously illustrated it. By their evil deeds they proved that though they might be literally descended from Abraham, they were out of sympathy with him and were in sympathy, instead, with the Adversary of man.

We show whose children we are by our feelings and our conduct. If God is our Father, we show it by love for His Son. God sent Christ to us, and if we are God's sons we shall welcome Christ's coming, appreciate His worth and believe His truth.

THE DIVINE SONSHIP OF CHRIST.

The Jews utterly failed to appreciate their privileges of sonship through Christ's teaching, and declared that

*A Meditation based on (John viii. 31-59); in the Bible Study Union Course on "The Teachings of Christ."