

The Philippian Church alone rose to the level at which it is possible to give and to receive in pecuniary matters, without damage to friendship, and these transactions between them and St. Paul, furnish a beautiful example of two very difficult arts—the art of giving graciously, and of graciously receiving. Many a gift is utterly spoiled by the manner of its bestowal, and many a kindly giver is wounded by a grudging or half-hearted acceptance of the gift.

Besides this very intimate matter, the Epistle to the Philippians stands out among the letters of St. Paul as the one in which the personal element is most apparent. In writing to this community, he had no need to vindicate his claim to be called an Apostle: there was no heresy to confute, no doctrine needing defence, no disorder in the church calling for rebuke. He was, therefore, at liberty to enter upon personal matters, to speak of mutual friends, most of all to discourse upon spiritual things. Unhampered by the limits of argument, he could expand his own soul, and lift those of his correspondents above the dust of the battlefield, into the clear still ether of the Christian verities. Hence in this Epistle the purer, calmer atmosphere prevails of Love, Joy, Peace: through it there breathes the Spirit of Christ: it is reminiscent of His very words—an echo whose tones are true to His voice. How to read an Epistle is a subject that might serve as a title to a second paper, but I am quite content with writing one. I may, however, suggest the immense advantage gained by reading an Epistle straight through, without any of the interruptions thrust upon us by the arbitrary divisions of the chapter and the verse system. The letter will then convey its natural impression of unity, cohesion, and force, which is destroyed by piecemeal reading. As one paragraph follows another we perceive the connection of the ideas in the writer's mind, we begin to be susceptible of a directly personal interest and it is easier to realize the conditions of the first reading. This in itself is no small gain, besides the insight it may bring into the meaning of inspiration. The letter was written 2,000 years ago to people whose circumstances differed from the conditions under which we live as widely as may be represented by that measure of time. Yet the words are fraught with an influence as powerful for us as if they had been penned but yesterday. These exhortations, these meditations,