

Christ Our All

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Chapter 1

Christ Our Life

Reading: Acts 16:6-13, 16-19, 23-26. Philippians 1:1-2.

We are beginning a meditation in the Letter to the Philippians with its message as to how the Cross makes Christ our all, for that is what this Letter really does bring before us. Not any of us can preach from this Letter as the standard of our attainment, but we must be very quiet and humble as we speak of it. Indeed, our approach must be that of its writer: "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already perfect."

When the Apostle wrote the Letter to the Romans, he set himself to set forth a great and tremendous theological argument. When he wrote his first Letter to the Corinthians, he set himself to answer a lot of questions that had arisen, and to give his judgment on some very serious matters. When he wrote the Letter to the Galatians, he gave himself up to issuing a tremendous challenge and to answering a challenge which had been issued. When he wrote his Letter to the Ephesians, he was pouring out a great revelation which had been growing and growing and growing until it had reached a great measure of fullness. But now, in writing this Letter to the Philippians, he is not doing any one of those things. He does not say: 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ', nor: 'I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ.' No official designation is used and no great treatise is in his mind, but he simply takes the position of a man - with Timothy he says: "Bondsmen of Jesus Christ" - and is about to open his heart as a man to men, as a Christian to Christians, as a lover of Christ to other lovers of Christ, and to share what is in his heart on common ground and on a common level with them.

"Brethren" - he will say presently - "Brethren, I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already perfect, but this one thing I do...". You see, it is the appeal from his own spiritual life and aspiration. His position is just this: 'Brethren, this is what I have in view, what I am seeking after, and what I call upon you to join with me in seeking after!' That is the position of this Letter, and you and I must come to that position as we approach it, for here not one of us can give an address. We can only say: 'Brethren, this Letter is beyond us! All that is here is far beyond anything to which we have attained! We cannot preach at one another but here is the Lord's thought, and let us talk to one another about it with a view to encouraging one another if it may be that we, by any means, may also attain.' So that is our starting-point. May it be that the Lord leads us on from that to some increased measure of Himself!

We have said that the message which comes out of the Letter bears upon Christ as our all through the work of His Cross, and that arises in several particular connections. Each chapter of the four has a particular connection. We shall now just look at the first, which arises in chapter 1, verse 21:

For to me to Live is Christ, and to Die is Gain

'For me to live is Christ.' Then that means that Christ is our very life, the very motive of our life, of our being. Asked what life means, the Apostle would say: 'Just Christ!' 'What does life mean to you, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What is your outlook, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What are you working for, Paul?' 'Christ!' 'What is your hope?' 'It is Christ!' 'Have you nothing else, nothing else at all in this world for all your days?' 'No, nothing else. Christ, just Christ; that is all! For me to live, for me to live is Christ!'

I think we have already established what we said a minute or two ago: this Letter is beyond us! I think that if we were put to the test on that in a number of different connections, interests, associations and objects on this earth, we should be weighed in the balances and found wanting. Well, we will not press it. It would be too painful and we should all be ashamed. But, again, it is an object and an aspiration that it should be like that.

Before we go further, let us just look over this chapter and see what place Christ has here:

Verse 1: "Bondsmen of Christ Jesus."

2: "Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

6: "Until the day of Jesus Christ."

8: "The tender mercies of Christ Jesus."

11: "The fruits of righteousness... through Christ Jesus."

13: "My bonds... in Christ."

15: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife."

18: "What then? only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

19: "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

20: "As always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death."

21: "To me to live is Christ."

23: "...to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better."

26: "Your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus."

27: "Worthy of the gospel of Christ."

29: "To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer in his behalf."

It is Christ everywhere, Christ in every direction, in every connection; it is all Christ.

Christ Our Life by Way of the Cross

Now then, we have to see how the Cross had brought Paul to the place where Christ was his very life, and how it had wrought in him to bring him to that place. We have read from the account of how this church at Philippi came into being, and we picked up the story at the point where Paul and his companions were moving prayerfully, and in the Spirit, forward in their great ministry. They reached one point and essayed to move on in a certain direction, but they were not suffered of the Holy Spirit to go and preach in that direction, and, finding that way closed, they sought to move in another direction, and again the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not; and so they stayed still. For the night at least they stayed where they were and prayed, I suppose, and during that night a vision came to Paul. You notice that *HE* saw the vision and *THEY* came to the conclusion. The man of Macedonia stood and appealed, saying: 'Come over into Macedonia and help us!', and they concluded that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel there. So they went by a straight course into Macedonia, into *Europe* for the first time, and came to Philippi. That all seems fairly straightforward. They went down on the Sabbath Day by the riverside, supposing that they would find a place for prayer. I expect that they were looking in all directions for the man of Macedonia. You know what they found - a woman, not of Macedonia at all, but from Asia, where they had been forbidden to go and preach the Word! Contradiction number one! And then a girl possessed of an evil spirit bothered, worried, annoyed and vexed them; not much hope of things in that direction! Contradiction number two! And then the immediate issue of Paul's act - they were thrown into the inner prison and their feet made fast in the stocks! Contradiction number three! Where is this man of Macedonia? Where is this open door for preaching the Gospel?

Now I venture to say that you and I might just have sat down and said: 'This is a terrible

case of mistaken guidance. It is all a mistake! I was quite sure that the Lord gave me that vision, that the Lord was in that matter of our coming this way, but everything now argues to the contrary! Now, seeking to do what I believed to be the Lord's will, this is where I get landed. I was trying to follow the Spirit's leading, and checking up as I went, and this is what obedience to the Lord results in! Something like that would go on inside, at any rate, for the devil would see to it. The situation, the appearances, the apparent contradictions, on the one hand, and then bleeding sores and a dark dungeon. These are things which are calculated to raise very serious questions about your Divine guidance and being in the will of God. At any rate, they provide good ground for the enemy to encamp upon. Well, I have no doubt that it was a very real and severe test of faith for Paul and Silas as to their guidance.

How did they survive? How did they get on top of this situation? For undoubtedly they were on top of it. At midnight they prayed and sang hymns. Again, I have to pause and say that this Letter is beyond us, and this whole matter finds us wanting. I think the answer, at least, a part of it, to the question of their triumph in such a situation is this: that the Cross had done a work deep enough to rule out all personal interests, and personal interests were so thoroughly ruled out that the Holy Spirit Himself had a clear way to bring up their spirits in triumph in spite of darkness in circumstances and darkness in spiritual appearances. The Holy Spirit was able to do this. You notice what Paul says in this first chapter - and it does seem to me that there is much in this Philippian Letter which is an echo of the Philippian experiences years before - "For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." 'The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.' Do you not think that that explains it?

We do not want to be too analytical or introspective, but it will not do us any harm to take account of our own disposition. If we are quite honest with our own hearts, is it not true that a very large measure of our darkness under trial, our failure, our breakdown, our going to pieces, our loss of position spiritually, is because we are disappointed, and our disappointment lies very largely in the direction of something upon which our hearts were set, something of personal interest even in the Lord's work; *OUR* ministry, the *WORK* - meaning, of course, the Lord's work and things for the Lord. We would not call it *OUR* ambition - perhaps we have never used the word 'ambition' - but may there not be an element of that lying behind our vision, something, even though it were for the Lord, which we had hoped would be blessed and prospered, and the Lord would give good success? The whole thing is brought, like David's enterprise with the ark on the new cart, to a sudden hold-up and everything seems to go to pieces, and *WE* go to pieces; then, when the truth is really known, we discover that there were really personal interests in it.

It does seem to me that in Paul's case the great factor in his triumph continually - for he was a triumphant man - in the midst of terrible adversities and trials and difficulties and sufferings all the way through the years was his utter disinterestedness; that with him there was no personal interest at all. It was Christ. The Cross had smitten everything personal, and this Letter to the Philippians is full of that. Take this fragment, for instance: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife, and some also of good will: the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel; but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds" (verses 15-17).

How mean, how contemptible, how wicked to preach Christ with a motive like that! To preach Christ in such a way as to afflict one of Christ's servants! What does Paul say? 'Contemptible wretches! The Lord bring His judgments to bear upon them!?' Not at all! 'Oh, what does it matter how they preach Christ? Christ is preached, and that is all that matters. Therein I rejoice and will rejoice!' I tell you that it wants a crucified man to say that! A man is in prison in bonds; other men are trying to hit him when he is down and are using the very Gospel or the preaching of the Gospel - their manner of preaching the Gospel - to that

end. Then this man says: 'That is all right. I will simply stand all that and thank the Lord that, however they preach, so long as Christ is preached, that is all that matters!' I say that it is a crucified man who can say that, a man who has no personal feelings or interests.

You know what he says a little later in the Letter about all the things that were gain to him. 'I was this, and I was that, and I was the other. I had this and I had that, and I was in a position. Yes, but these things which were gain to me I counted loss for Christ' - "Yea, verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and to count them as refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him" (chapter 3:4-8). You see, the Cross has dealt with name, reputation, position, advantages and everything that was personal. This man has come to the tremendous vantage ground of perfect disinterestedness and selflessness, and it is the working out of the principle that the Holy Spirit follows the way of the Cross.

The Spirit Follows the Way of the Cross

That is true right through the Word. The Cross leads the way of the Spirit: the Spirit follows the way of the Cross. We sing:

"Enlarge our soul's capacity,
Cut deeper channels, Lord.
Room for the floods of blessing new,
According to Thy Word."

'Cut deeper channels' - the Cross cutting the way for the supply of the Spirit. Here is the message, if we said no more. Paul was a man who was crucified to self. The Cross had wrought that in him, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus did the rest. Oh, I cannot preach at you! I can only say to you: 'Brethren, will not the Holy Spirit spontaneously take the course which the Cross has opened up? Will not the Spirit of Jesus come in and lift us up, even in our sufferings and our sorrows, when we have got rid of that horrible, hateful, obstructive self-interest, self-pity, self-consideration, self-realization and self-strength?' I am sure our hearts must be smitten by this word if it is true. If you and I - and this is the sum of the whole Letter - can really come, by the grace of God, to the place where the Cross has wrought in us so that we are delivered from all self-interest, on its weak side and on its strong side, the Spirit of Jesus Christ will make a difference in our case in the time of adversity which will turn the midnight into midday, darkness into light, and make us sing in a dungeon. At least it is worth thinking about! In Paul's case the Cross had resolved everything into a matter of Christ.

Now, perhaps some of you have gone beyond me, and even yet there lurks somewhere in your mind this question: 'Yes, but those who are most utter for the Lord, most out-and-out and most thorough-going for the Lord, are very often the ones who have the greatest reason to wonder whether the Lord is for them.' And yet when that question arises - and I must press this again - there is a tremendous deliverance from the sting of that sort of thing when you know, and the Lord knows, that you have no other concern but for His glory. I think the sting of discouragement, disappointment, despair and doubt is very often found just in the tail of some self-interest which means disappointment, personal disappointment as well as disappointment for the Lord. Well, what I see here in Paul's case is that, with the destruction of these self-elements, he came to a position which was a very strong one. This position - "For me to live is Christ" - in his case was a very strong position in the hour of deepest difficulty and trial. "I *KNOW* that this shall turn to my salvation." "Now I would have you know that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel." That is a strong position!

A Strong Position

What is the strength of it? It is this: that the sovereignty of God is behind it. If you and I can come to the place where this is true in our case - "For me to live is Christ" - where the Lord Himself knows that it is true and not just something said by us, then I believe it is a position which has the sovereignty of God behind it. See them at Philippi again! They were there for the Lord, and for the Lord only, without any kind of interest at all apart from His interests. Well, the situation which arose was a very difficult and perplexing one, apparently full of contradictions, but look at the sovereignty of God behind it!

How strategic it was, to begin with, in that it was an open door into Europe! And what an assembly came into being!

"I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now" (1:3-5).

What an assembly! And what a sovereign act to make the first members of that assembly the very gaoler and his family! Where Lydia came in I do not know. She was evidently a commercial traveller, and you know that that meant great possibilities for the Gospel, for she linked up Asia and Europe. It is all very strategic and wonderful, and God is behind this whole thing - and yet what a complication! If you sit down with the thing at the outset and take the situation which immediately arises, you say: 'Well, this is a mess! This is a mistake. You have made a blunder this time!' And you give it all up and lose your confidence in God. Well, Satan knew better than that: and these men who had not any personal interests did not go down under despair. They proved the sovereignty of God. And Paul in another prison years afterwards in Rome wrote this Letter and just touched on the same thing - that the sovereignty of God was behind a crucified life: "I would have you know that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel." "I know that this shall turn to my salvation." The sovereignty of God! It is a strong position, but we cannot be sure of sovereignty unless we are well crucified. If there is any sovereignty of 'I' or self, the sovereignty of God is set aside.

An Emancipated Position

And then it was a very emancipated position. How unfettered Paul was by human judgments! It did not matter a scrap to him what people thought or said or did. He was a free man all the time, whether he was in prison or out. Why? Simply for this. If you and I *KNOW* that we are not out for something here, that our hearts are really for the Lord and the Lord only, it is a wonderfully emancipated position to be in. What does it matter? Let these men preach in the manner in which they mean to bring harm upon us, preach against us, and even use the Gospel as an instrument against us! What does it matter? We are emancipated; we are on top of that! All are emancipated who are delivered from self. If we know that there is no question about our uterus for the Lord, we are not worried very much about things said and things done.

A Joyous Position

And I see, too, what a joyous position it was, and I say: 'I see it.' I am not telling you that I have got it, but I see it. Someone has said that the Letter to the Philippians can be summed up in a very brief sentence. It is this: "I rejoice! You rejoice!" And that is the Letter - "I rejoice and you rejoice!" It is full of joy right through - joy in the Lord. And what is the secret of joy? If you ask what the secret of misery is I can tell you very quickly: to be occupied with yourself. The secret of joy is to be occupied with the Lord.

May the Lord lead us into Paul's secret: the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ by the Cross!

Chapter 2 Christ Our Mind

The note in chapter two of the Philippian Letter is the Cross making Christ's mind ours - Christ our mind.

"...make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind." (verse 2).

"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him" (verses 5-9).

"For I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ" (verses 20-21).

"I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord" (4:2).

The Street of Gold

When we reach the end of God's work in this dispensation and see that work concretely represented in its consummate form, *SYMBOLIZED* by the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, the specific features of which are described or mentioned, we see that one of those features is that the city has one single highway or street, and that street, that highway, that thoroughfare of the new Jerusalem, is said to be of pure gold. God will not begin to make His city at the end of the dispensation. He is making it now, and every part of it is now in process of constitution, and not least the street of gold. When we take up our New Testament and begin to read these apostolic letters - Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians - we are already in the preparation of the city, or the city is already potentially present, for the city is the Church, and we can see the street running through all these letters as the Church is in view, or we see God making His thoroughfare, preparing His gold.

But the city is being prepared, constituted and built amidst much adversity, just as much as - and I think a very great deal more than - Nehemiah had to contend with in building the earthly city, or its wall.

To come straight to the point: this street, this thoroughfare of pure gold, is where *ALL* the saints meet. If there is only one street that is the only place; people will not have outside streets and back-ways out of touch with one another. They will all be there together in one place, and this gold, this golden thoroughfare, is none other than the drawing together of the love of God. What we really have, amongst the many other things in these letters, is the way in which the Cross secures that love which constitutes the oneness, the fellowship, of the saints: for the Cross is so closely associated with the love of God. We know that quite well, and we know that for His love to be truly in our hearts is the result of a deep work of the Cross. The letter to the Philippians brings that into view in a very clear, precise way. We have seen how all these letters lead on and on, stage by stage, step by step, to final fullness, each one taking up what has gone before to carry it on to something greater, but we will look back over them just for a moment.

The letter to the Romans is a great letter on the love of God. We need not stay to argue that, but you will remember that it is there that we have everything presented in a full, comprehensive way. It is *ALL* gathered there; our salvation in its fullness, in its completeness from every angle, is all gathered into that letter. But when you pass on from the letter to the Romans, then you begin to take things up, shall we say, piecemeal. The thing has to be dealt with in parts, so that the next letter - the first letter to the Corinthians - is very significant from this present standpoint of our immediate consideration. You remember how, at the beginning of the letter, the Apostle deplored the slowness of growth, the poorness and meagerness of spiritual life, so that he was having to speak to babes and not to men; and then he put his finger upon the cause and spoke of divisions among them. 'One says I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; another, I am of Peter, and yet another, I am of Christ,' and all these positions were repudiated and rebuked by the Apostle. Here was a making of four thoroughfares where God intended that there should only be one! I suppose the people who said: 'I am of Christ' thought that their thoroughfare was the best of them all, but probably it was the worst, because it was making Christ an instrument for doing the very thing that He had come to try to make impossible, for bringing about something that was furthest from the thought of God. All this was a terrible contradiction of love! It was a contradiction of the nature of the one street of the city, so we are not surprised that, as the Apostle gets near to the end of that letter he, by inference, says: 'Your gifts may divide you, and because gifts may divide or be the occasion for one setting off another, or for setting himself off against another, all these gifts may just miss their objective, which was for the building up of the whole Body. Therefore, although gifts may be right, in order for them to reach their end there must be the one all-governing thing: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal."' So he covers the ground of gifts and says that love is the way, love is the street, love is the thoroughfare, for them to reach this end of building the Body.

Satan's Antagonism to Fellowship

We might pause there, because what we want to see at the outset is how Satan continuously fights this very thing because of the tremendous issue, the end of love. What we are going to see, or what we may see at once without any waiting is that Philippians 2 brings immediately the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the highest place of authority, power and dominion in every realm. That is what this chapter brings into view: the Name which is above every name, in which every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess to the glory of God the Father. That is the end - the city being the vessel of the glory of God, having the glory of God by the testimony of Jesus.

Now, says the Apostle, in order to reach that Throne, that highest of all places, the way is: "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus." What is this mind? Well, 'be of the same mind one toward another... I beseech you to be of the same mind'. It is oneness in love. "I have no man likeminded who will earnestly be concerned for your affairs: they all seek their own, not the things which are Christ's." You see that this mind of Christ is a oneness of mind which has no self in it - and that is chapter 2: "He emptied himself." There was a great deal of self at Corinth. Satan continuously fights against the building of the city, and especially against the preparing of this highway of love. Sometimes it would seem that the objective of the devil is the destruction of the love of God's people one for another because of the great end in view through that love: "Love buildeth up". Dear friends, what do these things mean 'I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Peter, and I am of Christ'? Do you not think that it is very probable that those who said: 'I am of Paul' were really taken up with a line of teaching? 'That is Paul's teaching, Paul's interpretation, Paul's vision, Paul's conception, Paul's wonderful comprehension of spiritual things as such!' It was something peculiar to Paul's ministry that attracted them, and they made *IT* the thing upon which they fastened. Apollos - well, we have come to think of him as being a very eloquent man, a man of eloquence and burning zeal. According to the word in Acts 18 he was a learned man, he

knew the Scriptures, was full of zeal and very earnest, but, again, it was something peculiar to a man and his ministry, or, shall we say, to a ministry. Peter - what shall we say of Peter? It may have been that Peter, being the Apostle to Jews of the Dispersion, appealed more to those who had a Judaistic outlook and rather relieved the tremendous strain which Paul's heavenly position put upon them. Whatever it was, you see that it was a *MAN'S* line of things, given him by God, but something of ministry which appealed to them. What shall we say of the fourth group? 'I am of Christ!' Well, it may just have been this: 'I do not belong to your denomination, nor to your sect. I do not belong to any denomination at all. I am above and outside.' Even such can make undenominationalism a denomination and standing apart, and be schismatic. That is why I said that perhaps this is the worst of all. We have to be very honest and faithful in facing things like that. These are the things that have been going on all through the centuries. The people of God have been broken up by teachings, ministries, personalities, and then by false conceptions of what a heavenly position is - perhaps as represented by the 'Christ party', *FALSE* conceptions of a heavenly position. Oh, if the Lord will enable us to receive this word, it may make a lot of difference and provide a way, as we were saying earlier, for the Holy Spirit, a way for the 'supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ'. The Cross has to do something in this matter!

The Work of the Cross

Now first of all, you and I have to allow the Cross to smite and to slay everything represented by the first three, that is, teachings, interpretations, specific lines of truth, of ministries and personalities in ministry, so that in no way are we attached to these as things, but rather, in a true and right and spiritual way, it is Christ who is our focal point, our meeting point, our basis - Christ Himself. We may have Paul, Apollos and Peter and not grow one whit spiritually, like the Corinthians. We may have all that they have to give us and still remain stunted because there is an 'it', a something, a line, a teaching, an interpretation, a ministry. We think, of course, that it is the Lord. Are we quite sure? That it really is the Lord is a matter about which we have to be made very sure. And then the Cross must deal with this fourth thing, or that which is represented by the fourth thing: 'I am of Christ!' I will be very practical and come right to the point. *It is a false apprehension of a heavenly position for anyone to run down Christians because they are in denominations, and to have anything in them which separates them from children of God because they are in these things.* That is a false apprehension of a heavenly and spiritual position. I want to say that with great emphasis. Such people have not yet come to the place where they can discriminate between children of God and things in which children of God may be. You and I might come to the place where, more or less, we could not participate in the *THINGS*, and might see that the *THINGS* - call them what you like, 'sects', 'denominations', such things - are limiting things and are a contradiction to the thought of God. We may come to see that there is all the difference between a very strong feeling and conviction about that, and allowing our feeling toward the thing to touch the people who are children of God. Dear friends, you have to keep a very wide gap between those two things, and when you meet someone who is in something, which *THING* you feel the Lord has delivered you from or led you out of or shown you to be not in accord with His mind, you must not allow your feeling toward that *THING* to touch that child of God. Our attitude toward a child of God is to be the love of God for His children *AS HIS CHILDREN* wherever they are, and there are children of God in some extraordinary places and in things which may be unthinkable to us. You and I have to recognize children of God wherever they are, in whatever they are, and keep the street intact - one street, one thoroughfare. We walk with children of God as they walk with the Lord because they are children of God. Satan's business is to try and make that impossible and to split up this street into a thousand highways and byways and cul-de-sacs. It is true! He is fighting against this all the time, and there is nothing too sacred for him. The tragic, painful, grievous story of the Church is just this - the story of Satan's mischief in dividing the Lord's people.

Well, Corinthians is basic to this matter. I would like to leave what I have just said and say no more, but if only the Lord would take hold of that and deal with us on this matter! It does seem to me, dear friends, that if we violate this it is as though we drew something across the thoroughfare and closed the way to our own progress and to our own testimony. If we cut short God's way, our way is cut short. Well, Satan fought it at Corinth in this way, and you see how Paul answered.

Paul fought it in another way at Galatia, but it was the same thing in principle. Here these Galatian believers had shown marvelous love, the love of Christ, at their conversion, toward the Lord's servant who was used as their spiritual father. He said: 'You would have plucked out your very eyes and given them to me!' Then along came the Judaizers with their pernicious work and they gave themselves over to the devil to do this very thing, and that beautiful love, which showed itself so wonderfully at the beginning, just passed out. These Galatians turned against the very man whom God had used to bring everything into their lives. Read the letter again in the light of Satan's work against the love of God, and see what Satan was after: 'Ye did run well. Who has cast the witch's spell over you?' 'Having begun in the Spirit, do you think you are going to be consummated in the flesh?' What is the devil after? Simply the arresting and turning back of these people in the way to God's purpose. And how did he do it? Well, you may say by Judaizers, by false teachers, by false brethren. Yes, but in main how? By interrupting the love between them and the one whom God had appointed and chosen to lead them on to His full thought.

We dare not pass through all the Epistles now! You notice that Galatians leads on to Ephesians, and Ephesians takes up Corinthians and Galatians. How wonderful is Ephesians on love! When you get to the end of the letter you have the great revelation of the love between Christ and His Church: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it." And you know that it is not long before you find yourself in the battle in the heavenlies. When you look very closely you will find that it is love that is very largely Satan's objective. Why do I say that? You look at the letter itself, and then go over to the first chapters of the book of the Revelation, where the Lord says to *EPHESUS*: "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." Satan has won!

You pass into Philippians, and it looks back and it looks on. It looks back to Corinth. How much there is in this letter to the Philippians that savours of what we have in Corinthians, although, of course, it is very much more beautiful here and things are on a very much more advanced level; and yet, you see, you get something coming down the way, a dim reflection of what was at Corinth. What is all this about? "Be of the same mind", "be of one mind... one love... one heart... one soul!" What is it all about? It is a Corinthian peril again at Philippi, and the need still is that the Cross should keep out all that ground which is contrary to love, the love of Christ, and hold the saints together unto the full end. There is a real backward look in this Philippian letter, as you will see if you only look at it.

And there is the onward look. After this we shall come to Colossians in this Divine ordering of the arrangement of the letters, and there we shall find ourselves in the presence of "Christ, all and in all" for the Church, that is, the Church now coming into the fullness of Christ. But with what does Philippians anticipate that? Oh, Satan's way of preventing the whole corporate expression of love by individual differences! That is what you have in Philippians. It seems that the trouble - what trouble there was - at Philippi was individual differences. Here are Euodia and Syntyche, two sisters, I presume, who had a difference. I think it is a very wonderful thing that the Apostle knew all about individual things at Philippi, and the state of things between individual believers! But there it was, and these individual differences were Satan's blow at the great corporate oneness in the fullness of Christ.

My point is this, dear friends: that it is no use our talking about the Church, the Body, or the

city in these comprehensive terms and figures, and their wonderful representation and all that they mean, and be taken up with the great idea which makes its appeal to us and fascinates us. That all becomes nonsense if there are those in a local assembly who are not of one mind. It is all nullified by such people. The message of Philippians is just sandwiched between Ephesians and Colossians. Think of that! I always thought that there was a point where the arrangement broke down: Colossians and Ephesians ought to be right next to each other, Colossians first and Ephesians next. That may be how they were written, but the Holy Spirit is quite right in the arrangement. Ephesians: the Body comprehensively presented with its great eternal calling and destiny; Colossians: the Church in relation to the Head in whom the fullness dwells, and sandwiched in between there is a little letter like this which says: 'Yes, these are great conceptions, immense Divine ideas and intentions, but do not forget that the whole arch rests upon one keystone, and the keystone is two of you - Euodia and Syntyche.' Very practical! My word, it brings us up sharp! I said earlier that this letter finds us out, and none of us can stand up to it.

Now, all that we think, all that we stand for, all that we speak of, all our vision, all the great language and phraseology - "the Church", "the Body", "the city", "the eternal purpose", "the calling and the destiny" - just come to be focused upon something between persons: "Be of the same mind." You see, when the city comes, it will be inconceivable that two people should be somewhere up in a corner or in a side road having a difference. We all have to move together on one thoroughfare, and the nature of that thoroughfare is pure gold - perfect love. That is what God is working at, and that is what Satan is working against. How very elementary we are! How at the beginning of things we are! But are we really? Philippians is well on, and it just says to us that perhaps it will be more difficult to show this mutual love and be of this oneness of mind at the end. Perhaps it will get more difficult as we go on. Perhaps Satan will have a great deal more to use and to play with, and will use it well. Perhaps the battle will become far more intense. Yes, I have no doubt but that Satan will persist in increasing force in his endeavour to divide and scatter the people of God.

Now, a great responsibility is thrown upon us by this very simple word. The whole testimony of Jesus just comes back again to become a matter between persons, and what this letter says to us, particularly in this part, is this: Wherever they are, in whatever they are, children of God are still children of God, members of the Father's family - a brother, a sister of yours and mine - and we must not be evilly affected toward anyone because of any of the reasons why they are where they are. They may not have seen what you have seen, they may not have had the advantage of the teaching that you have had. Oh, countless may be the reasons why they are there, but if they love the Lord it is not for you or for me to judge them. See how Paul takes this line all the time with those who did things which others thought to be utterly wrong! Some of us feel very strongly about the fundamentals of the faith, but many a man who would not be called a fundamentalist, and who by his very upbringing and training is a modernist, has been won by the love shown to him by others. Many who have gone away into that sort of thing have at the end come back by love being shown, and love can do a great deal more than argument. We must not hate *PEOPLE* away from the Lord by our hatred of their wrong ideas.

Now, we are not going to compromise with evil, and we are not going to say that wrong things are less wrong, but let us always keep that gap between a true child of God and the thing he is in. Many modernists are *NOT* truly born again children of God. Many *HAVE* a background to which they may return when suffering intervenes. In any case, let us not harden the situation by an un-Christlike spirit. Let us show love unto all, for there is so much hanging upon it. I am sure that if the Cross will do this work in us it will be cutting a channel for the Spirit, and He will have a freer way; and I am quite sure that the Holy Spirit is locked up and hindered where there is anything that is contrary to the love of God.

Chapter 3

Christ the All-Dominating Object & Prize

What we have said about Christ as our mind leads us straight into chapter three of the Letter to the Philippians. Chapter three is the continuation of what is in chapter two. We recognize the convenience of chapter divisions, but we greatly regret them. They are not part of the original New Testament writings, but were only introduced by a man named Stephen Langton in the thirteenth century, just as the verse divisions were made by the Paris printer Stephanas in the seventeenth century. These divisions help us to find the place, but they are very artificial and really - in one way - are apt to rob us of real values. So very often it is essential to run straight on in the reading, ignoring the chapter division, in order to get the full value and meaning of the subject being dealt with.

There are few better examples of this than the one before us (as mentioned above). The continuity is found in this: "Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus", who - in order to secure God's full purpose and realize God's full end - emptied Himself and let go of everything that He had, and humbled Himself, etc. The goal and prize of all this was His full and final exaltation and glory. This was the mind of Christ.

Now Paul goes on to say that that mind had been planted in him and - in the much lesser way - he had let go of the rich heritage which had been his and had counted it all valueless in view of the great "on high calling" to "gain Christ". The loss of all things was incomparable to that great ultimate "gain", the fullness of Christ. Christ's supreme example, and Paul's own apprehension of Christ with this very practical effect, were the basis of his appeal for oneness of mind in believers. What Paul is really saying is that oneness, unity, and singlemindedness among believers will be achieved by - and only by - *THIS* Christly disposition, and by Christ being the only and all-absorbing object and prize. He contrasts this "mind" with those who "mind earthly things" (4:8) and who "seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ" (2:4,21).

We could include *MANY* things in that "all seek their own", for apparently this referred to the Judaizers, who were wanting to change Christianity. Maybe 'their own things' were just "things" in which *THEY* were interested in Christianity. It has turned out in Christianity that the means to the end have become more than the end. Hence jealousies, rivalries, vested interests, the clientele, support, the 'Mission', the 'Denomination', the Institution, etc., and if anything seems detrimentally to affect it, a bitter spirit arises, and charges of 'sheep-stealing', divisiveness, and so on, split the spirit of Christ. If everything were looked at as to whether it has a contribution of Christ to make to believers, rather than how it affects our particular interest, Christ would be the unifying object.

Paul was not saying that there must be uniformity of mind on all particular points, for "there are diversities of gifts", and functions, but that in right and proper diversity there should be one all-unifying "mind"; the passion for Christ transcending and dominating all else, and arbitrating in all issues.

Paul's own life, a life so capable of versatility, variety, many interests and possibilities, was unified by this "one thing" (3:13). We must keep clearly in mind that in what Paul is saying here he is not thinking of salvation, but of the purpose of salvation, which is so very much

more than escaping eternal judgment and getting into heaven. I do not think that the deep concern and exercise shown here by the Apostle meant that he feared for his salvation, but, as he says, "If by any means I may attain" - unto what? Being an eternally saved soul? No! But "that I may apprehend *THAT FOR WHICH* I was apprehended": "The prize of the on-high calling".

The stress - if that is the right word to use - the intensity exhibited by Paul is not because God has made it difficult, but because every art and artifice, every means and method of Satan, every danger in his own reactions to suffering is encountered *especially by those who are set upon, and in the way of that on-high Calling!* The enemy knows the ultimate peril to his kingdom involved in this utterness for Christ, for the on-high calling is to reign, and there is an "If" attached to that. So this oneness of mind is an immense potential!

In his appeal the Apostle reminds his readers that this motive comes from the very fact that their "citizenship is (now) in heaven" (3:20) and therefore the "on-high" or "heavenly" calling should be in the very constitution and disposition of a heavenly people.

May our true heavenly nature assert itself more and more powerfully so that
"the things of earth (do) grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace."