

Paul's Gospel

On parts of Philippians 1 - 3.

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Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

At the time of the Reformation man did not get beyond justification by faith. They did not know Paul's gospel, which was the glory of the Christ of God shining down into the heart, even of the persecutor, and filling his whole being with its blessed power. This was the root of his walk; his walk was in the power of that light and life — the gospel as tasted and enjoyed by Paul from heaven. I never get thoughts of this in my own soul without becoming very deeply impressed with my shortcomings on the one hand, and the immense privileges flowing from out of it on the other. Paul, writing from his cell, guarded perhaps by soldiers, could say, "To me to live is Christ!" Sorrow in his heart he had for the bad condition of things. Still he could say, I have "earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified, whether it be by life or by death." (v. 20.)

Let us see what characterised his state. That Christ should be magnified, he knew not how; by sufferings, or by patience, or by being sent back to work for Him. The desire is one, that Christ should be magnified; that spite of every circumstance against him, yet that Christ should be magnified in his body. I know no two things so sweet. All that is in Christ, mine; in heaven, His; yet in that cell, in that poor body, He should be magnified. In Saul of Tarsus there was no room for Christ; in Paul the prisoner the Lord magnified His grace, and that immediately, that very night. What lay at the root of this desire that Christ should be magnified? Ah! that, "to me to live is Christ! All my motives, Christ; all my energy, Christ; all my end, Christ!" Aye, all his springs in Christ flowing into his soul! And in a body, too, that man could bolt in and leave in prison. Oh! could you jot down, in any little interval of business or daily work, "To me to live is Christ"? Knowing, in your counting-house, in your homes, Christ as the spring, the motive, energy? Doing all your duties to Christ because He put you there, and all is to be done to Him? Oh! who is thus Pauline — knocking about the world, chained to a soldier, or shut up in a dungeon, and all for Christ, the risen, the ascended Christ; and as He is up there for me, so am I down here for Him?

Let us look at the root. Christ so full in Himself — He is the fulness of each. The grand characteristic of Christ was, when here, subjection unto death. The disciple has the same eternal life, and must know the dying daily to get the fulness of blessing. Christ died out of the world. Israel would have had Christ, if He would have let His glory out, and taken things into His own hands. The Christian's pathway in the divine life is to obey; to obey in subjection to God. Christ would have nothing except from God's hands. Is it God working in you? God works to will: He claims us. It is a solemn thought, that God has taken us up to desire and to will; and He will enable us to do. Whence can I draw water to turn the wheels of that mill? In Christ up there at His right hand. Paul saw that Christ up there, and his heart turned to delight in Him. Can we see the person of Christ up there, and not know desire after Him? I am wishing to show you this Christ working in you to will. Is there a backwardness to give up anything for Him? What? for Christ? Not to get Christ, but because you have that Christ, and because He has looked down to take your heart, and do you think anything great to

sacrifice for Him when He gives you fellowship with Himself? Oh! could you make a cold calculation as to the worth of that Christ beyond all joy of earth? Am I willing for Christ? Am I acting for Christ?

Two things are brought home to my heart — that Christ has won a place, that all should be at His feet — and He has begun at my heart. Ah! God lets the beauty of His Son shine into your soul, and I claim that your heart be subject to it. I am sure, if the eye has not been anointed to see what Christ has won, we shall not own Him as Lord:

Oh, nothing can stop the fulness of blessing flowing out from that Christ who has passed through death and come out on the other side! In Philippians 3, we get the Lord as a living person, and the eye rests on Him as He is now, and as He is to be when He comes forth. I am united to Him in the place where He is, and as dead here my life is hid with Him in God. I look to Him up there, and know His thoughts, not according to what we are here, but as in Christ according to the Father's thoughts of us, who has committed us to Him, and has given us to have a portion with Him; to be like Him, to be as those with whom He is to be the first-born among many brethren. How far are you and I realizing this? Have you part in that life? You have a portion in that Son; are your springs in that Son? Are you waiting for that Son? There is nothing in this epistle but a living Christ, and our union with Him up there; and our fellowship with Him down here in subjection and obedience.