
"CHRIST IS ALL"
A SERMON
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"Christ is all" -- Colossians 3:11

My text is so very short that you cannot forget it; and, I am quite certain, if you are Christians at all, you will be sure to agree with it. What a multitude of religions there is in this poor wicked world of ours! Men have taken it into their heads to invent various systems of religion and if you look round the world, you will see scores of different sects; but it is a great fact that, while there is a multitude of false religions, there is but one that is true. While there are many falsehoods, there can be but one truth; real religion is, therefore, one. There is but one gospel--the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a wonderful thing it is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, should be born of humble parents, and live as a poor man in this world, for the purpose of our salvation! He lived a life of suffering and trial, and at length, through the malignity of his enemies, was crucified on Calvary as an outcast of society. "Now," said they, "there is an end of his religion; now it will be such a contemptible thing, that nobody will ever call himself a Christian; it will be discreditable to have anything to do with the name of the man Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth." But it is a wonderful fact that this religion has not only lived, but is at this hour as strong as ever. Yes! the religion he founded still exists, and is still powerful, and constantly extending. While other religions have sunk into the darkness of the past, and the idols have been cast to the moles and to the bats, the name of Jesus is still mighty; and it shall continue to be a blessed power so long as the universe shall endure.

The religion of Jesus is the religion of God; hence, notwithstanding all the obloquy and persecution which it has had to encounter, it still exists, and still flourishes. It is this religion which I shall attempt to preach to you--the one gospel of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ-- and the text embraces it all in the most comprehensive manner, "Christ is all." I shall use it, first as a test to try you, and, afterwards, as a motive to encourage

you. I want, first, to sift you, to see how many of you are the people of God, and how many are not. I shall make my text a great sieve, and put you in it to see which is wheat and which is chaff. We must consider this passage in two or three senses in order, first, to use it as:--

I. A TEST TO TRY YOU. Christ must be all, as your Great Master and Teacher. There are some who set up a certain man as their authority; they regard him as their master, they look up to him as their teacher, and whatever he says is right; it is the truth, and is not to be disputed. Or, perhaps, they have taken a certain book, other than the Bible, and say, "We will judge all things by this book"; and if the preacher does not teach exactly the creed written in that book, he is set down as not sound in the faith, and this they do not hesitate to say at once, because he does not come up to the standard of their little book! We meet with many people in this world who make their creed, their one little narrow creed, everything, and they measure everything and everybody by that. But, my friends, I must have you say that "Christ is all," and not any man, however good or great, before I can allow that you are Christians. We have not to follow men. Our faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. We are to follow no man, except so far as he follows Christ, who alone is our Master. Be not deceived; submit not yourselves to creeds, to books, or to men; give yourselves to the study of God's Word, derive your creed and the doctrines of your faith from it alone, and then you will be able to say:--

*"Should all the forms that men devise
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the gospel to my heart."*

Let Christ be your only Master, and say, in the words of our text, "Christ is all." Now can you say this, or are you boasting, "The Baptists are all"--"The Wesleyans are all"--"The Church of England is all"? As the Lord lives, if you are saying that, you do not know his truth; because you are not testifying that "Christ is all," but simply uttering the Shibboleth of your little party. I should like to see the word party blotted out from the vocabulary of the Christian Church. I thank God that I have no sympathy whatever with that which is merely sectarian, and have grace given me to protest against it, and to exclaim:--

*"Let party names no more
The Christian world o'erspread";*

since:--

*"Gentile and Jew, and bond and free,
Are one in Christ, their Head."*

If "Christ is all" to you, you are Christians; and I, for one, am ready to give you the right hand of brotherhood. I do not mind what place of worship you attend, or by what distinctive name you may call yourselves, we are brethren; and I think, therefore, that we should love one another. If, my friends, you cannot embrace all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, no matter to what denomination they may belong, and as belonging to the universal Church, you have not hearts large enough to go to heaven; because, if such be your contracted views, you cannot possibly say, "Christ is all."

Next, Christ must be all, as your principal object in life--your chief good. Your great aim must be to glorify Christ on the earth, in the hope and expectation of enjoying him for ever above. But as it regards some of you, Christ is not your all. You think more of your shop than you do of him. You are up early in the morning looking at your ledgers, and all day long toiling at your business. Do not mistake me: I dislike lazy people, who let the grass grow over their shoes; and God disapproves of them too. We want no lazy gospellers. The true Christian will say, "I know that I am bound to be diligent in business; but I want to work for eternity as well as for time. I need something besides earthly riches; I want an inheritance not made with hands, a mansion not built by man, a possession in the skies." Are you making this world you all? Poor souls, if you are, the world and the fashion thereof are passing away; your all will soon be gone. I fancy I see a rich man, one whose gold is his all, when he gets into the next world, looking for his gold, and wondering where it is, and being at length compelled to exclaim, in despair, "Oh! my all is gone!" But if you can say that Christ is your all, then your treasure will never be gone; for he will never leave you, nor forsake you. Not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, you shall be happy and blessed, for you shall be crowned with glory, and made to sit with Christ on his throne for ever.

"Well," says some easy-going gentleman, "I do not make business my all, I assure you; not I: my maxim is, let us enjoy this life, let us fill the

glass to the brim, and live in pleasure while we may." I have a word also for you Do you think that such a course of conduct will fit you for heaven, for the enjoyments of eternity? Do you imagine that, when you come to die, it will be any pleasure for you to think of your drunkenness? When you are lying on a sick bed, will your oaths bring you any peace, as they reverberate upon your conscience, just as I hear my voice, at this moment, echoing back to my ears the words I am saying? I think I see you starting up as you hear your blasphemies against God thus returning upon you, while, with a mind oppressed with anguish, and eyes starting from their sockets, you exclaim in your terror, "I hear my own oaths again! God is coming to call me to judgment; to demand of me why I dare blaspheme his name!" and the Judge will say, "You, with oaths and curses, profaned my holy name; you asked me to curse your soul, and now I will do it; you prayed in your profane moments that you might be lost, and now you shall be." How horrible that would be! You who say pleasure is all, let me warn you that you will have to drink the bitter dregs of the cup of pleasure to all eternity, no matter how sweet the draught may now be to your taste.

But there are some more moderate people, who are by no means extravagant in their pleasures, and are great sticklers for religion; they go to church or chapel every Sunday, and believe themselves to be very good sort of people, and such as will be accepted at the last day, and placed on the right hand of the throne. Again I put the question, can you say, "Christ is all"? No; you cannot say that. Many of you make the externals of religion your all, resting in the letter, but knowing or caring nothing for the spirit. This will not do; and you are not such Christians as Christ will own if you are making anything your all but himself. Religion is not to be stowed away in the dark garret of the brain. Christianity is a heart religion, and if you cannot say, from the very depths of your being, "Christ is all," you have neither part nor lot in the blessings and privileges of the gospel, and your end will be destruction, everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord. God grant it may not be so; but that in both your lives and mine we may each be enabled to say of a truth, "Christ is all"; and that we may meet again around the eternal throne!

Next, Christ will be all, as the source of your joy. Some people seem to think that Christians are a very melancholy sort of folk, that they have no real happiness. I know something about religion, and I will not admit that I stand second to any man in respect of being happy. So far as I know religion, I have found it to be a very happy thing.

*"I would not change my blest estate,
For all that earth calls good or great."*

I used to think that a religious man must never smile; but, on the contrary, I find that religion will make a man's eye bright, and cover his face with smiles, and impart comfort and consolation to his soul, even in the deepest of his earthly tribulations. In illustration of this, I might tell you the story of a poor man who lives in one of the courts in Holborn, who experiences great joy in religion, even in the midst of the deepest poverty. A Christian visitor, going up into the poor man's room at the top of the house, said, "My friend, how long have you been in this place?" "I have not been downstairs, nor walked across the room, these twelve months." "Have you anything to depend upon?" "Nothing," he replied; but recollecting himself, he added, "I have a good Father up in heaven, and I depend upon him entirely, and he never lets me want. Some kind Christian friends are sure to call, and they never go away without leaving me something; and I get enough to live on and pay my rent, and I am very happy. I would not change places with anybody in the world, for I have Jesus Christ with me, and my heavenly Father will take me home by-and-bye, and then I shall be as rich as any of them--shall I not, sir? Sometimes I get very low, and Satan tells me that I am not a child of God, and that I had better give up all as lost; but I tell him that he is a great coward to come and meddle with a poor weak creature like me; and I show him the blood, sir; and I tell him the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin; and when I show Satan the precious blood, sir, he leaves off tempting me, and flees directly, for he cannot bear the sight of the Saviour's blood."

Thus we see that true religion can cheer the sick man's couch, can make the poor man feel that he is rich, and bid him be joyful in the Lord. Well did the old man say that the devil cannot bear the sight of the Saviour's blood; and if, beloved friends, you can take Christ's blood, and put it on your conscience, however sinful you may have been, you will be able to sing of Christ as all your hope, all your joy, and all your support. I ask you who love Jesus, does religion ever make you unhappy? Does love to Jesus distress you, and make you miserable? It may bring you into trouble sometimes, and cause you to endure persecution for his name's sake. If you are a child of God, you will have to suffer tribulation; but all the afflictions which you may be called upon to endure for him will work for your

good, and are not worthy to be compared with the glory which is to be revealed hereafter.

Now, then, let me ask, could you go with me while I have been speaking? Can you now say that Christ is your only Master, your chief good, your only joy? "Oh! yes; I do love Jesus, because he first loved me." Then, welcome, brother; you are one with Jesus, and we are one with each other. But if you cannot say it, how terrible it shall be with some of you, when you shall find your gourds wither, the props whereon you now lean struck down at a blow, your false refuges swept away, and, deprived of all your feathers and finery, your soul will appear before God in its true character! May it not be so with any of you, but may you be united to Christ by living faith, which works by love, and purifies the heart! Secondly, I shall now consider the text as:--

II. A MOTIVE TO ENCOURAGE YOU. "Christ is all." My beloved friends, in what is he all? Christ is all in the entire work of salvation. Let me just take you back to the period before this world was made. There was a time when this great world, the sun, the moon, the stars, and all which now exist throughout the whole of the vast universe, lay in the mind of God, like unborn forests in an acorn cup. There was a time when the Great Creator lived alone, and yet he could foresee that he would make a world, and that men would be born to people it; and in that vast eternity a great scheme was devised, whereby he might save a fallen race. Do you know who devised it? God planned it from first to last. Neither Gabriel nor any of the holy angels had anything to do with it. I question whether they were even told how God might be just, and yet save the transgressors. God was all in the drawing up of the scheme, and Christ was all in carrying it out. There was a dark and doleful night! Jesus was in the garden, sweating great drops of blood, which fell to the ground; nobody then came to bear the load that had been laid upon him. An angel stood there to strengthen him, but not to bear the sentence. The cup was put into his hands, and Jesus said, "Father, must I drink it?" and his Father replied, "If thou dost not drink, sinners cannot be saved"; and he took the cup and drained it to its very dregs. No man helped him. And when he hung upon that accursed tree of Calvary, when his precious hands were pierced, when:--

*"From his head, his hands, his feet,
Sorrow and love flowed mingled down,"*

there was nobody to help him. He was "all" in the work of salvation. And, my friends, if any of you shall be saved, it must be by Christ alone. There must be no patchwork; Christ did it all, and will not be helped in the matter. Christ will not allow you, as some say, to do what you can, and leave him to make up the rest. What can you do that is not sinful? Christ has done all for us; the work of redemption is all finished. Christ planned it all, and worked out all; and we, therefore, preach a full salvation through Jesus Christ.

What could we poor mortals do towards saving ourselves? Our best works are but mean and worthless to that great end; I am sure I could not do it. My preaching--I am ashamed of that, and there are a thousand faults in my prayers. God wants nothing of us by way of "making up" Christ's work; but he cancels all the sins, and blots out all the transgressions of everyone who trusts to his Son's death.

If I have found Christ, I have found all. "I have not strong faith," say you. Never mind; Christ is all. "I do not feel my sins sufficiently"; but Christ is all. Many people think they must feel a load of repentance before they may hope Christ will receive them. I know every child of God will repent; but we are not all brought to the cross by the terrors of the law. It is not your feelings, my friends, that will save you; but Christ only, Christ standing in your stead, Christ being your Substitute. If, feeling your need of his grace to pardon you, and his righteousness to justify you before God, you can but just look to Christ, though you have nothing good about you, you will have done all that is necessary to carry you to heaven; because it is not your act that can save you, but the act of Christ alone. A little while ago, I had a conversation with an Irishman, who had been to hear me preach. He had come to ask me, he said, the way of salvation. "What troubles me," said he, "is this: God says that he will condemn the sinner, and punish him; then how can God forgive, because he must punish if he would keep his word?" I placed before him the Scriptural view of the atonement, in the substitution of Christ for the sinner; and the poor man was astonished and delighted beyond measure, never having understood the beauty and simplicity of the gospel way of salvation before. "Is it really so?" said he. "It is in the Bible," I replied. "Then the Bible must be true," said he, "for nobody but God could have thought it."

If Jesus Christ is our Surety, friends, we are safe from the demands of the law. If Christ is our Substitute, we shall not suffer the penalty due to

sin; for God will never punish the same sin twice. If I have nothing but Christ, I do not want anything else, for Christ is all. If Christ is your all, you will not want anything to help you, either in living or in dying. Now for two thoughts before I close.

1. If a man has Christ, then what does he want else? If a man has Christ, he has everything. If I want perfection, and I have Christ, I have absolute perfection in him. If I want righteousness, I shall find in him my beauty and my glorious dress. I want pardon, and if I have Christ, I am pardoned. I want heaven, and if I have Christ, I have the Prince of heaven, and shall be there by-and-bye, to live with Christ, and to dwell in his blessed embrace for ever. If you have Christ, you have all. Do not be desponding, do not give ear to the whisperings of Satan that you are not the children of God; for if you have Christ, you are his people, and other things will come by-and-bye. Christ makes you complete in himself; as the apostle says, "Ye are complete in him." I think of poor Mary Magdalene; she would have nothing to bring of her own; she would remember that she had been a harlot; but when she comes to heaven's gates, she will say, "I have Christ," and the command will go forth, "Let her in, Gabriel; let her in." Here comes a poor squalid wretch, what has he been doing? He has never learned to write, he scarcely went even to a Ragged- school, but he has Christ in his heart. "Gabriel, let him in." Next comes a rich bad man, with rings on his fingers, and fine clothes upon his person; but the command is, "Shut the gates, Gabriel; he has no business here." Then comes a fine flaming professor of the gospel; but he never knew Christ in his heart. "Shut the gate, Gabriel." If a man has Christ, he has all for eternity; and if he has not Christ, he is poor, and blind, and naked, and will be miserable for ever. Will not you, then, who are listening to me now, resolve, in the strength of the Lord, to seek him at once, and make him your Friend? No matter what may be your state or condition, you are invited to come to him.

Ye blind, ye lame, who are far from Christ, come to him, and receive your sight, and obtain strength! He is made your all; you need bring nothing in your hand to come to him. "Ah!" says one, "I am not good enough yet." Beggars do not talk thus: they consider that, the more needy they are, the more likely are they to obtain that for which they ask. The worse the dress, the better for begging. It is the same with respect to the gospel; and you are invited to come to Christ just as you are, naked and miserable, that he may clothe and comfort you.

2. My last thought is this: How poor is that man who is destitute of Christ! If I were to say to some one of you that you are poor, you would reply, "I am not poor; I have 250 pounds a year coming in, a decent house, and an excellent situation." And yet, if you have not Christ, you are a poor man indeed. Look at that poor worldling with a load of 10,000 pounds upon his back, a quantity of stocks and annuities in one hand, policies and railway scrip in the other; but he is wretched with all his wealth, though he can hardly carry it. There is a poor beggar-woman, who says to him, "Let me take a part of your burden"; but the miserable man refuses all assistance, and resolves to carry all his load himself. But by-and-bye he comes to a great gulf, and, instead of finding these riches help him, they hang around his neck like millstones, and weigh him down. Yet there are some who would do anything for gold. If there be one man more miserable than another in hell, it must be the man who robbed his neighbours to feather his own nest; such feathers will help the flight of the arrows which shall pierce his soul to all eternity. No matter what your wealth, if you have not Christ, you are miserably poor; but with Christ, you are rich to all eternity.

Methinks I see one of you ungodly ones in your last moments; someone stands by your bedside, and watches your face; the death-sweat comes over you, and the big drops stand on your brow; the strong man is bowed down, and the mighty one falls; and now the eye closes, and the hand falls powerless--life is fled. Ah! but the soul never dies! Up it flies to appear at God's bar. How will it appear there? Oh! the poor soul without Christ! It will be a naked soul; it will have no garment to cover it--it will be a perishing soul, no salvation for it. Mercy cannot be secured then; it will be in vain to pray then, because the lamp will be put out in eternal darkness. And the Judge will say, in tones that will pierce you to the quick, "Depart from me, ye cursed."

May God give all of you grace to repent, and to embrace the salvation which is revealed in the gospel! Every sin-sick soul may have Christ; but as for you who are Pharisees, and trusting in yourselves that you are righteous, if you know nothing about sin, you can know nothing about Christ. The way to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "But what is it to believe?" you say. I have heard of a captain who had a little son, and this little boy was very fond of climbing aloft. One day he climbed to the mast-head, and the father saw that, if the boy attempted to return, he

would be dashed to pieces; he, therefore, shouted to him not to look down, but to drop into the sea. The poor boy kept fast hold of the mast; but the father saw it was his only chance of safety, and he shouted once more, "Boy, the next time the ship lurches, drop, or I will shoot you." The boy is gone; he drops into the sea, and is saved. Had he not dropped, he must have perished. This is just your condition: so long as you cling to works and ceremonies, you are in the utmost peril; but when you give yourselves up entirely to the mercy of Christ, you are safe. Try it, sinner; try it, that is all. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," is Christ's promise, and it shall never fail you. The invitation is to all who thirst. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come, and take the water of life freely." I have heard that, in the deserts where they can only get water at long intervals, they send a man on a camel in search of it; when he sees a pool, he springs off his beast, and before he himself drinks he calls out, "Come," and there is another man at a little distance, and he shouts, "Come," and one further away still repeats the word, "Come," until the whole desert resounds with the cry, "Come," and they come rushing to the water to drink. Now I do not make the gospel invitation wider than the declaration of the Word of God, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Whosoever you are, and whatsoever you may have been, if you feel your need of Christ, "Come," and he will receive you, and give you to drink of the water of life freely.