

CHRIST'S POVERTY, OUR RICHES

NO. 2716

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 3, 1901.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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“For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty might be rich.”

2 Corinthians 8:9.

IT is well to notice that Believers are to be constrained to Christian duty by Gospel motives rather than by legal arguments. It is poor work to try to stir up a Christian to perform an act of Grace by an argument fetched from a heathen moralist. And it is equally poor work to try and lead a child of God to perform a service of love by an argument which is applicable only to a slave. Hence you will find that the Apostle Paul, when he wants to urge the saints in Corinth to liberality, does not tell them what they are bound to do according to the requirements of the Law of God, for they are not under the Law—he uses arguments suitable for men who have come under the blessed Sovereignty of Divine Grace!

It is also noteworthy that with regard to Christian liberality, there are no rules laid down in the Word of God. I remember hearing somebody say, “I would like to know *exactly* what I ought to give.” Yes, dear Friend, no doubt you would. But you are not under a system similar to that by which the Jews were obliged to pay tithes to the priests. If there were any such rule laid down in the Gospel, it would destroy the beauty of spontaneous giving and take away all the bloom from the fruit of your liberality! There is no law to tell me what I should give my father on his birthday. There is no rule laid down in any law book to decide what present a husband should give to his wife, nor what token of affection we should bestow upon others whom we love. No, the gift must be a free one, or it has lost all its sweetness.

Yet this absence of law and rule does not mean that you are, therefore, to give less than the Jews did, but rather that you shall give more because, if I rightly understand what is implied in the term, Christian liberality, it is to be according to the example of Christ Himself! Our text really gives the Christian law of liberality—“*For you know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you, through His poverty might be rich.*” That is to say, we should give as we love. You know how much our Lord Jesus Christ loved by knowing how much He gave. He gave Himself for us because He loved us with all the force and energy of His Nature. Why did that woman break the alabaster box and pour the precious ointment upon Christ's head, when it might have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor, or when she might have kept her ointment for herself? She gave much because she loved much. I commend that rule to you—give as you love and measure your love by your gift!

Further, for this also seems to be the teaching of the text—give till you feel it—for the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was proven by the fact that, “though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.” He gave till He felt it, gave till He knew that He was giving all that He had. And I do verily believe that the great sweetness of giving to God begins when we feel the pinch, when we have to deny ourselves in order that we may give. Then it is that there is the true spirit of Christian liberality! Our Lord Jesus Christ gets from a good many people what they would not dare to keep back from Him, and what they can readily enough part with—it is sometimes about as much as their shoestrings cost them in a year—certainly not as much as they spend upon the smallest of their many luxuries. Yet the most of them consider that they have done all that they should when such insignificant offerings have been laid at their Lord's feet! But, dear Friends, I hope that it will be your rule both to give as you love, and to give till you feel it.

And next, we should in some sense give all, for that is the meaning of the text—"Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." He emptied Himself, He gave all that He had. And we, as Christians, are bound to confess that we belong to Christ and that all we possess is to be used by us as stewards under Him, not reckoning anything to be our own, but gladly admitting that He has entrusted it all to us to be used prudently, wisely and discreetly for His Glory. Oh, that we all came up to that standard! Then should we have the great pattern and model of Christian liberality reproduced in ourselves far more largely than it is at present!

I was obliged to say what I have in order to introduce the text to your notice, for we ought never to take a passage of Scripture out of its connection without first of all explaining its real meaning and purport. Still, Christian liberality is not to be my main subject at this time. I want, rather, to show you, first, how *Christ has enriched us by His poverty*, "that you, through His poverty might be rich." When I have spoken about that, I purpose to spend a few minutes in speaking upon *our enjoyment of the riches which Christ's poverty has bestowed upon us*.

I. First, then, I am to tell you about OUR ENRICHMENT BY CHRIST'S POVERTY. How is it that, by Christ's poverty, we become rich?

Firstly, *it was poverty in Christ's part to become a Man at all*. God the Illimitable, the Infinite, veiled Himself in human flesh! God the Omnipotent, the Eternal, came here in the form of a Baby hanging in weakness at a woman's breast. God, whom angels adore, before whom all Heaven bows with deepest solemnity of awe, was found where horned oxen fed—and in a manger was He laid. It was poverty for Him to take these rags of our poor humanity and clothe Himself with them, for His own robe was the light, His chariot was a flame of fire, His palace the Heaven of God! Yet was He found at Bethlehem, a Child born, a Son given, that He might redeem His people from all iniquity! We cannot comprehend the condescension of Christ half as much as the angels can—they have a far higher view of the Glory of God than we have and, therefore, they have a clearer apprehension of the wondrous steep which Jesus made when He became Man for our sakes. What poverty it was for Him—it was not so much for Joseph and for Mary as for Him—to be in the inn and to find that there was no room for Him! In fact, what poverty it was for Him to be a Baby at all!

Yet it is by that poverty of His that we become rich, for now, every believing man may lift up his head and rejoice that there is One who sits upon the very Throne of God, who also is a Man even as he is. Neither Gabriel, nor any other angel, has ever been taken into union with God as we have been! "For unto which of the angels said He say at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten You?" "He took not up angels, but He took up the seed of Abraham." Well may we say, "Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him? You crowned him with glory and honor and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." Now the next Person to God is man, and Manhood and Godhead are, in Christ Jesus, joined in a wondrous unity which is indissoluble throughout eternity! O my Brothers and Sisters, at the very outset of our subject we see how the poverty of Christ Incarnate has enriched us!

Being born, *our blessed Lord lived, for many years, a life of poverty at Nazareth*. He was a carpenter, the reputed son of the village carpenter. One is sometimes inclined to wonder what He did throughout those 30 years, and to wish that some authentic record of them had been presented. "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart" and, at times, we feel some regret that she was not Inspired to write down the sayings of the Holy Child, the wondrous speeches of the sanctified Youth as He grew up, the wise words that He uttered as He pushed the plane and drove the nails. Yet we are sure that it was not necessary for us to know all that, or it would have been revealed to us. Enough is recorded for us to see that He remained in poverty and obscurity at Nazareth for our sakes, because, dear Brothers and Sisters, during those 30 years He was preparing for His public work. It was necessary that He should bear that restraint which, for a time, He put upon Himself.

I doubt not that some of us might have done more for our Lord if we had not begun so soon—if we had enjoyed, in seclusion like our Savior's, more opportunities of growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man—we might, perhaps, have been made more fit for our work even if the term of our service had been somewhat shortened. However what might be with us, we know that our Master was hidden away in quietude, and His poverty was making us rich because He was preparing to achieve that wondrous life-work by which He has enriched all His people to all eternity! He was away there, at Nazareth, having sympathy with obscure people, sympathy with artisans, sympathy with those of whom we seldom hear much, sympathy with those who are shut up in workshops from morning till night, tempted in all

points like as they are, yet without sin. And, at this moment, the wealth of His great heart, so rich as it is in intense sympathy with manhood, is making us rich because for those 30 years He was so poor and so obscure.

He came out, at last, into public life, and *when He emerged from obscurity, it was to a life of poverty*. You remember His words concerning Himself—"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." He was dependent upon the gifts of His followers, or upon the godly women who ministered unto Him of their substance.

He never made a will, for He had no real or personal property to leave. Yet He made that best of all wills when He said, "Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory, which You have given Me: for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." Jesus of Nazareth was most manifestly a poor Man and in His poverty He suffered hunger, and thirst, and weariness, and all the woes that are usually associated with poverty.

I might summarize His whole life by quoting Paul's words, "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." That earthly life of His was every moment of it proving that "in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of His people. For in that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." "We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." He knows your poverty, dear Friends, your needs, your woes. All that makes life bitter to you, He has tasted, only He drank to the very dregs from the cup of which you do but sip a little now and then. It is His poverty that makes you rich at the present moment—and you shall be forever full of comfort and joy because He was so poor while He was here below!

But it was towards the close of His life here on earth that our Master entered into the deepest poverty of all. And I want you who are believers in Jesus Christ, you who are really His followers, to have patience with me while I show Him to you in the extremity of His poverty and ask you to see how, *even in His deepest agony*, He has made you rich. See Him there, amid the olives in Gethsemane's Garden, prostrate in prayer, and covered with a bloody sweat as He pleads with His Father on His people's behalf. Do you see that cup, filled with wormwood and gall, of which He must drink if you are to be saved? Can you bear the sight? Are you not overwhelmed with penitent sorrow as you see the Lord of Life and Glory lying there covered with His own gore—and know that all His agony was on your account? It is that poverty of His which has made you rich, for He has taken from your hands the cup of His Father's just wrath against sin and He has drained it Himself! And, instead thereof, He has set before you the cup of salvation from which He bids you to drink the new wine of the Kingdom of God full of joy and delight! So, drink and forget your poverty, and remember your misery no more! "Yes, drink abundantly, O Beloved!" Behold, your Savior gives you the love of God to drink—and better than the wine of angels is the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Yet you never could have had that cup of blessing in your hand if He had not first emptied that other cup which His Father gave Him to drink—that cup of awful bitterness which He resolved that you should never taste.

See Him rising from prayer in Gethsemane and, behold, Judas comes and with a kiss betrays Him—and in that betrayal He was poor, indeed. But He has, through His poverty, made you rich, for you never shall be betrayed as He was! They bound Him and led Him away as their captive—and who is poorer than the man who has lost his liberty, and is taken off to prison and to judgment? Yet that captivity of His has made you a free man in Christ Jesus. When He was personally arrested, He said, concerning His disciples, "Let these go their way that the saying might be fulfilled, which He spoke, Of them which You gave Me have I lost none." And it is the same with you if you believe in Him—no warrant from the Court of Heaven shall ever come to you, nor from Hell, either. If the Son has made you free, you are free, indeed, and you shall be free forever! Christ's captivity has led your captivity captive, and thus again His poverty has made you rich.

Next, they take Him away to Annas and Caiaphas. Picture the scene as best you can. He stands before a cruel high priest who insults and mocks Him. Note the depth of His poverty. He is brought so low that He receives no help from the one specially ordained to be the helper of the helpless! Then see how rich you are—for, inasmuch as He had to appear before an unkind and wicked high priest, you have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities!

You have a tender and gentle High Priest to whom you may always come without hesitation or fear! But, had He not stood as a prisoner before Annas and Caiaphas, He would never have become what He now is as the merciful and gracious High Priest exactly adapted to your needs.

Now the wicked men begin to accuse Him. He is brought so low that they even rob Him of His Character! Yet, to do that, they have to find false witnesses and these do not agree! But, still, they do find witnesses to accuse Him in order that they may take His life. Surely, a man is never poorer than when he is left in the hands of his enemies to be slandered in open court, and to have none to speak in His defense! But let your joy rise high while you remember that it was because Christ was falsely accused that you can now confidently say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Therefore He will lay no iniquity upon those who are in Him. "He was numbered with the transgressors." His name was put in the place of our names and, therefore, we are no longer numbered with the transgressors, for no one can now lay anything to our charge, for He has met every accusation on our behalf!

While they had our gracious Master in their power, Herod, Pilate, the priests and the people mocked Him. Oh, it was shameful mockery! They ridiculed His royalty by putting a reed scepter into His hand, a soldier's old purple coat over His shoulders and a thorny crown upon His blessed brow. They cast scorn upon His prophetic office by blinding His eyes and buffeting Him, and saying, "Prophecy unto us, Christ, Who is he that struck You?" They spat in His face. They struck Him with their hands. They treated Him as the vilest of the vile. Now, Beloved, see how you are enriched by His poverty. Because of all this shame which Christ endured, you shall not be put to shame nor be confounded, world without end! To each Believer, the ancient promise is true, "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, says the Lord." Yes, just as low as your Savior stooped in His humiliation, so high do you rise because of your union to Him! Just as much as He was mocked, so much are you honored! He was treated like a slave and felon, so you are made to be a son of the Highest—

*"Behold what wondrous Grace
The Father has bestowed
On sinners of a mortal race,
To call them sons of God!"*

Not only did those wicked men mock our Lord, but they also scourged Him with those cruel thongs which made deep furrows on His blessed back. Oh, what abject poverty was that when His very body was not reckoned as His own, but was allowed to be brutally beaten at the will of another! Yet see how rich He has made us by His poverty, for it is written, "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." There is no scourging for you, Believer, for the stripes have all fallen upon your Substitute! God's sword of justice has been sheathed in the very heart of Christ, so, if you believe in Him, it can never touch you! Oh, how secure you are! Not a blow can fall upon you now—not the smallest drop of Divine wrath can ever be your bitter portion, for Jesus bore the blows for you and drank the cup of wrath quite dry. Your warfare is accomplished, your iniquity is pardoned, for, in the Person of your great Substitute, you received of the Lord's hand, double for all your sins, and you are forever clear.

After they had scourged the Savior, they condemned Him to death, even the death of the Cross, for they cried, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," "and Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required." Yet, while you mourn over that crowning act of infamy, let your hearts dance for very joy, for because Jesus was condemned, the Believer can never be! Here is the Scripture to prove my assertion—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." God has absolved you, O Believer, from all your guilt, and you are absolved forever! Christ has washed you in His precious blood and you are clean every whit—no speck, nor spot, nor stain of sin remains upon you, even in the sight of God Himself—therefore, go your way and sing for joy of heart!

At last they hanged Him up on the Cross to die. He was made a curse for us, that the curse which was upon us might be taken away forever. They stripped Him naked, that we might be clothed with His righteousness. God forsook Him, so that He might never have to forsake us. His disciples all ran away from Him and left Him alone, that we might never be alone, but might always have the Father with us and, at last, come "to the general assembly and church of the first-born,

which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant.”

See, now, the Lord of Life and Glory has bowed His head in death! He has yielded up the ghost. His poverty has reached its climax, for He is stripped of life itself. Yet therein is the greatest cause of joy for all Believers, for we died in Him and sin died in Him and, for us, death died in Him! So our greatest riches spring from His deepest poverty—we find eternal life in His death, a Heaven in His Cross—we ascend to Heaven through His grave!

I want you, dear Friends, to keep this thought vividly and constantly before your minds, that it is Christ's poverty that makes you rich. You must look on everything that relates to your Lord and yourselves by way of contrast—just so far as He goes down, you go up. Just as much as He is emptied, you are filled. Just as He is condemned, you are justified. Just as surely as He dies, so surely do you live beyond the fear of death. Here is a deep mine of unspeakably rich treasure for you—dig in it as much as you can, for you will never exhaust it!

II. I will not detain you many minutes with the second part of our subject, but I want to give you a few practical lessons while I speak about our ENJOYMENT OF CHRIST'S RICHES.

Think, dear child of God, that, as it is Christ's poverty that has made you rich, *how poor you would be if you had not Christ!* Perhaps you are possessed of a great deal of worldly property, but it would be poor stuff—would it not—if you had not Christ with it? All our temporal mercies are like so many ciphers—they count for nothing by themselves—but when you have Christ, there is the great unit before the ciphers and He gives to them a value which they could not have without Him! All the gold of the Indies, all the silver of Potosi, all the treasures of the world cannot fill the heart of man. How poor is any man who is here with us now, who has not Christ as his Savior! You do not think so? But you will think so one of these days, and all Believers here pray that you may think so this very hour! Whatever your title-deeds may be, and however large your possessions—if you have not Christ, you are a poor man. Perhaps, on the other hand, you are in deep poverty and have not anything in this world to call your own. What a poor creature you must be if you have no treasure laid up in Heaven! To go home to a miserable hovel in this world. To earn next to nothing and then to go out of this world into the next, still poorer...O poor, poor Soul! Do try, I pray you, to obtain an inheritance in the world to come, for, if you are without God, and without Christ, you are indeed a poverty-stricken creature! God grant that you may not rest contented in your present wretched condition!

The next observation is that if it is Christ's poverty that has made His people rich, *how foolish are we to try and find our riches in the world!* It is our tendency to try, if we can, to find something that will satisfy us apart from Christ. That is not either wise or kind on our part. If the Lord gives you temporal mercies, take heed that you do not set your heart upon them. Say concerning them, “They are only toys lent me for a season, and they will have to be given up whenever they are claimed by Him who lent them.” Always beware of thinking that this world is your home—you are not to be here long enough to strike root. “Ah,” said one to a wealthy man, when he went over his estates, “these are the things that make it hard to die.” So they do. Therefore mind that you always feel like a plant that the gardener has loosely laid in the ground till he can find time to plant it. Suck up just enough nourishment to live upon, but say to yourself, “I am not to always live here, but in a garden where biting winds can never blow. Where—

*“Everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers’—*

“so I have but to live on here till the Gardener comes and puts me in my proper place.” Find not your riches, dear Friend, in a world where Christ had none, but look for your treasure in the land where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

The next remark I will make is, *how unbelieving it is of some of us to feel poor if we really have been made rich by the poverty of Christ!* Is all that I have been talking about only a matter of fancy, or a freak of the imagination? If it is so, we will throw it away and beg you not to accept it. But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if you really believe that Christ's poverty has made you rich, what are those furrows doing on your brow? Why those carking cares, those anxious thoughts that so oft perplex you? You say that they come because you are so poor—but how is that? Christ's poverty has made you rich! You have not many of this world's poor three-penny pieces and cracked four-pennies, but you have that which is worth more than gold and diamonds—you have an eternal inheritance! So what are you fretting and worrying yourself about?

Here is a young prince who has got down among the rough boys in the street, and he is crying because he has lost a piece of an old broken plate. You say to him, "Child, go home to the palace, for your father, the king, will give you royal playthings." And when I see one who is a child of the King of Kings acting as if he were a worldling, I may well say to him, "Go home, child, to your Father, and begin to rejoice in the eternal possessions which He has laid up for you." You know that we sometimes sing—

*"He that has made my Heaven secure,
Will here all good provide.
While Christ is rich, can I be poor?
What can I need beside?"*

Good old John Ryland was right when he sang like that, and we shall be wise if we follow his example. You will have as much as you need, Friend, if you trust in the Lord, for "no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." You know that one cane is enough for a man to walk with, but some of our friends have a great bundle of canes and I know some of them who have cartloads of walking-sticks—yet they cannot use more than one at a time. King George III once met a stable-boy and said to him, "What do you get, Jack, for your work?" "I get nothing, Sir," the boy replied, "only my food and drink, and a place to sleep in." The king said, "Well, that is all they give me." That is about all that a man really needs—you cannot eat 10 times as much as you now do, even if you have it—and you cannot wear a hundred suits of clothes at once if you have them! If you have more than you need, you cannot enjoy it, so be content with what you have and go through the world thanking God that He will take care of you for time and for eternity!

Once again, *how ungrateful it must be in us if we ever flinch from any loss for Christ's sake*, for He became absolutely poor, even unto death, that He might make us rich! Shall we ever hesitate to part with anything for His sake? What if following Him should involve us in losses, or if we cannot trade as some people do because the fear of God restrains us, or if we have to give up a situation because we cannot break the Sabbath, or because of some other conscientious difficulty? We ought to gladly take the spoiling of our goods, and rejoice even to suffer the loss of all things, if need be, for the sake of Him by whose poverty we have been made rich!

And, finally, *how vast is the inheritance which Christ has given to His people!* If you are to judge of what He gave us by what He *gave up* for us, it must be something absolutely amazing! If our riches are really in proportion to His poverty, that poverty, even to bloody sweat and death upon the Cross, was so extreme that our riches must be extreme, too! Lift up your eyes, you sons of light, look beyond that narrow stream of death—over there is your heritage! Do you see that fair city smiling in everlasting light far brighter than the sun? Behold its jeweled courses, and its 12 foundations sparkling like a rainbow with divers hues of wealth! And do you hear, as you stand outside its gates of pearl, the matchless melody of the new song that goes up day and night? Do you see the white robes of the shining ones, in peerless bliss, as they traverse the pavements of gold and cast their crowns at the feet of the King, their Lord and Savior? All that is yours—and your Lord has given you a guarantee that you shall have it and all that is needed to bring you there in due time! And you may be there very soon for all you know.

But suppose you should live to the extreme limit of human life? How soon those years will pass! Or suppose that Christ should come all of a sudden—and He may come at any moment. Or suppose that while you are sitting here, a convoy of angels should come and bear your spirit away? We are much nearer than we think—some of us are very much nearer than we think, to our eternal rest. It is only a week or two, a month or two, a year or two before we shall be there. Then, courage, my Soul!—

*"The way may be rough, but it cannot be long,
And I'll smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song."*

I remember preaching, one summer's afternoon, about the New Jerusalem. There was a sister sitting on my right hand downstairs—not in this building, but in a country place—and I noticed her eyes sparkling as I spoke. It seemed to stir my very soul as she looked at me with such an extraordinary gaze of joy, and I was stirred up to say something more, and something better about our happy Home above. When I saw her, apparently still looking at me, a minute or two later, I perceived the same fixed gaze, and I stopped and said, "I think that Sister is dead." And she was. She had gone Home without a sigh, or a groan, or a moan. In the fullness of the prospect, the delight seemed to have swelled like a mighty wave and washed her on to the heavenly shore! Who knows how soon a similar experience may be ours? We may

go to sleep tonight and awake in eternal Glory! We are not far from Home, so let us be of good cheer, and rejoice, and praise and bless our Divine Lord that He should ever have stooped so low to raise us so high!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PHILIPPIANS 1:12-30; 2:1-13.

Philippians 1:12-14. *But I want you to understand, brethren, that the things which happened to me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; and many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear.* Notice the beautiful self-forgetfulness of the Apostle Paul. So long as the Gospel could be more widely published, he did not mind where he was, or what he suffered. He was able to witness for Christ among the Praetorian guards who had the charge of the prison where he was confined and who, also, in their turn, were on duty in Caesar's palace. So Paul says that through his being in bonds there, the particulars concerning his imprisonment were talked about even in the imperial palace—and by that means the Gospel was made known to many in Caesar's household. Then, in addition, other brethren who, perhaps, might have felt compelled to be quiet in his presence, finding that their leader was removed from them, waxed confident to come out and “speak the Word without fear.” The same sort of thing has often happened since. You have sometimes seen a widely spreading oak tree cut down and you have missed its grateful shadow. Yet, afterwards, you have discovered that many little trees which would have been dwarfed beneath its shade, have grown more rapidly in its absence and, in like manner, the removal of some eminent servant of the Lord Jesus Christ has frequently made room for others to spring up and more than fill his place.

15-19. *Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife; and some also of goodwill: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the Gospel. What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.* It is much to be desired that all who preach Christ should preach in a right spirit, but even if they do not, let us be glad that Christ is preached! Even though it is only a portion of the Gospel that is proclaimed, and there is much mixed with it from which we greatly differ, yet, if Christ is preached, His Gospel will win its own way and work out His great purposes of love and mercy. You have, perhaps, sometimes seen a little fire kindled among the dead autumn leaves which are damp. And you have noticed that despite all the smoke, the fire has continued to live and burn. So is it with the eternal Truth of God. Notwithstanding all the error with which it is often dampened, and almost smothered, it will live and the Truth of God will conquer the error which is piled upon it. So Paul says, “I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”

20, 21. *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it is by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* Again I bid you mark Paul's devotion and self-forgetfulness. It seems to be a matter of no choice with him whether he serves God in life or glorifies Him in death. The emblem of the American Baptist Missionary Union is an ox standing between a plow and an altar, with the motto, “Ready for either”—Ready to spend and be spent in labor, or to be a sacrifice, whichever the Lord pleases.

22-27. *But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I know not. For I am in a strait between the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more necessary for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again. Only let your conversation be as it becomes the Gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.* What a happy Church is that where the members all “stand fast in one spirit,” and where they are all, “with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel”—not striving with each other, but all fighting for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints!

28. *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.* They give you up as lost because they cannot frighten you! They take it as a token of your perdition that you are not terrified by them and it is so to them. Yet, to you, the peacefulness with which you can endure slander and persecution should be a token of your salvation.

29. *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.* What an honor this is to be conferred upon any follower of Christ—"not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake"! It is not every Christian who receives this mark of honor. There are some Believers who have peculiarly tender places in their hearts and who are wounded and gashed by the unkind remarks of those who love them not because they love the Lord Jesus Christ. But to you, my Brother, my Sister, it is given—and you may well rejoice in such a gift—"not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

30. *Having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.*

Philippians 2:1-4. *If there is, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any heart and mercies, fulfill you my joy, that you be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things.* Do not obey the world's maxim, "Take care of Number One." "Look not every man on his own things."

4-7. *But every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation.* Observe that expression, "of no reputation."

7. *And took upon Him the form of a Servant.* A slave.

7, 8. *And was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.* What a cruel and ignominious death for the Son of God to suffer! Did He lose anything by all this wondrous condescension? Will you lose anything by any dishonor that may come upon you for Christ's sake, for the Truth of God's sake? No! Listen to what followed our Savior's humiliation—

9-11. *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in Heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* Note how the Apostle, after writing on this high theme, again seeks the practical good of his friends at Philippi.

12, 13. *Therefore, my Beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.*

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