

## **THE BELIEVER'S GAIN HIS LOSS, THE BELIEVER'S LOSS HIS GAIN**

Preached at Eden Street Chapel, Hampstead Road, London, on Lord's Day Morning, August 24, 1845

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Philippians 3:7-9

There are two instances of sovereign grace which shine forth in most conspicuous lustre in the New Testament. One is, the conversion of the thief on the cross: and the other, the call by grace and the call to the ministry, of Saul of Tarsus. I do not mean to say that every call of the Spirit is not a manifestation of sovereign grace. I do not wish to imply that one heart is a whit better than another; or that one man is more an instance of sovereign grace than another man. But there were circumstances that surrounded the call of these two men, which heightened, if heightened it can be, the superaboundings of sovereign grace. And the Lord, by these two men, seems to have given us two instances—one, of human nature in its worst form, and the other, of human nature in its best form. He has held up to our view man in the depth of profanity, and man in the height of profession: to shew, that neither the depth of profanity, nor the height of profession, is beyond the reach of almighty, distinguishing, and superabounding grace.

In the **thief upon the cross**, we see human nature in its worst light. We behold a malefactor stained with a thousand crimes: we view him at last brought by a strong hand of the law to suffer merited punishment: yet we see him quickened and made alive by sovereign grace, brought to believe in the crucified Lord of life and glory, and taken by the blessed Lord himself into paradise, to be for ever with him.

In **Saul**, we see a pharisee of the pharisees, carrying natural religion to its greatest height, adorned with everything virtuous, moral, honourable, and consistent. We see this man, who had gone as far to the extreme of pharisaism, as the thief had gone to the extreme of profanity, arrested by the same almighty power, and brought to the same point—to fall into the dust as a poor sinner, and be saved by the manifestation to his soul of Christ's blood and righteousness.

For the instruction and edification of God's people in all time, the apostle Paul was inspired and directed to leave his experience upon record. And this experience of the apostle we have under different phases. In three different places in the Acts of the Apostles we have his call by grace circumstantially detailed, accompanied, in his case, with a call to the ministry. In the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, we have his experience as a Christian man set forth, as distinct from his apostleship; there he describes the conflict he had with sin, the daily struggle betwixt nature and grace, and the power of these two opposing principles. In the second epistle to the Corinthians, in various portions scattered up and down, we have his experience as an apostle—the trials and consolations connected with his ministry—described. And in the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians, and more especially in the passage before us this morning, we have him in three distinct points of view—three distinct appearances, or phases, as I may call them.

We have **Paul past, Paul present,** and what **he hoped to be,** or what I may perhaps call Paul future.

In other words, I shall endeavour, if God enable me, to unfold this passage this morning, by shewing,

I.—What Paul was in the time to which he referred as past.

II.—What Paul is in the time of which he is now speaking.  
And,

III.—What Paul hoped to be in time to come.

These three distinct features, for the sake of clearness, I shall endeavor this morning to unfold, as various portions of the experience of the apostle Paul. And in so doing, I shall try to run a parallel betwixt your experience and his experience, that you may see whether the Lord has wrought in your heart and conscience any measure of that which he wrought in the heart of Paul.

I.—Our first point will be to look at **what the apostle was.** This we may divide into two distinct periods: first, what he was **before** the Lord quickened his soul: and **secondly,** what he was **after** he was so quickened.

1. Paul, as I before hinted, seems to have carried natural religion up to its very height. Do we want an instance of what the flesh is in its most religious form? in it's brightest shape, distinct from, and independent of, the grace of God? Do we want to see how far a profession of religion can be carried out? We have it in the case of the apostle Paul. What does he say of himself? He is trying to put down all fleshly confidence; he therefore points out what a child of God is: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit,

and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

Every child of God, he says, has three distinct marks stamped upon him: first, "he worships God in the Spirit;" secondly, "he rejoices in Christ Jesus;" and thirdly, "he has no confidence in the flesh." But some might answer, 'It is very well for you, Paul, to talk of having no confidence in the flesh; for you never had anything to trust to, or boast in.' 'Stop,' replies the apostle, 'if there be any man in the world who might have had confidence in the flesh, who might have trusted in natural religion in its highest, brightest, and best form, I am the man.' Then he tells us what those things were in which he could have trusted, and which appear to have been the grand points in those days in which the religious people, independent of the grace of God, the strict devotees of that period, trusted for eternal life. Indeed, the Jews used to say, 'If only two men of the human race were saved, one would be a scribe, and the other a Pharisee.'

He tells us then, that he was "circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews." These were what we may call, in the language of our day, his 'religious privileges.' Under this head, he could boast that he was "circumcised the **eighth** day," the traditional law allowing circumcision from the eighth day after birth till the twelfth, but attaching peculiar sanctity to the eighth; that he was not a Gentile, but a real Jew; that he was not from apostatizing Israel, but of the tribe of Benjamin, which adhered to Judah when the ten tribes departed; that he was not a Hellenistic, Gentilizing Hebrew, who had forsaken the language of his fathers, and adopted, in some measure, Grecian customs, but was "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," a Jew throughout: born not only of two Hebrew parents, but following out to the very letter the strict

obligations of the ceremonial law, as well as all the traditions of the elders.

With respect to his religious education and religious profession, he could boast that he was "as touching the law, a Pharisee;" the strictest of the sects; not a monastic Essene, not an infidel Sadducee; but a rigid, austere, and unbending Pharisee. And to shew that he had embraced this strict pharisaism, not from hypocrisy, but from real fleshly enthusiasm—that his heart was thoroughly in it—that it was not to deceive others, but that he was really deceived himself—to shew that he had something more than mere outside profession, that his creed had touched his natural conscience, he shewed his "zeal by persecuting the church," by abhorring, hating, and imprisoning the disciples of the Lord of life. As he told King Agrippa, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth: which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts 26:9-11).

As respecting his life and deportment before men, he could say, "Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless;" that is, outward righteousness. There are two kinds of righteousness connected with the law; one **of** the law, another **in** the law. These are not indeed distinct in their nature, for one comprehends the other; but they are distinct as regards our experience of them. For instance, the righteousness of the law condemns an adulterous look as adultery; but the righteousness **in** the law condemns but the outward act. He was not, then, blameless touching the

righteousness **of** the law, in its spirituality and purity; but as touching the righteousness **in** the law, in its observances and commands, he was blameless—leading a most upright, consistent, virtuous, and honourable life. Surely if heaven could be gained by religious privileges, a strict life, and good works, Saul of Tarsus had, a fairer claim than anybody.

Now, you will observe that the strict religious professors of those days rested for salvation upon those things which the apostle enumerates as meeting in himself. And can we not find a strict parallel now? Things are changed with time: but man's heart is not changed, and the fleshly confidence of human nature is not altered. Can we not then find now a precise parallel? Let us endeavor to trace it out. Is it not the boast of many that they are born of religious parents? Is not **that** a present parallel with being—"a Hebrew of the Hebrews?" Do not others glory that they were sprinkled in infancy by a minister of the Established Church? Is not that parallel with "circumcised the eighth day?" Do not others boast, that they have had a strictly religious education, been trained up to piety from childhood, been instructed in the Catechism and all things taught at the Sunday school, and been carefully watched over by parents and guardians? Is not this a parallel with Paul sitting at the feet of Gamaliel? Do not others rely for salvation upon attending church or chapel regularly, never omitting the ordinance or the sacrament, being constant in their prayers night and morning, reading so many chapters of the Bible every day, and living according to the strictest laws that man has devised for them, or they can devise for themselves? Is not this a parallel with "touching the law, a Pharisee?" Are there not others who believe that they are doing God service when they speak against the doctrines of grace, when they persecute Christ's people, when they hate vital godliness as manifested in the experience, or carried out in the life of God's family? Is not

this a parallel with, "concerning zeal, persecuting the church"?

And do not others expect heaven as the reward of their good works, and pride themselves upon leading a moral, upright, perfectly consistent life? Is not this parallel with "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless"?

Now upon these things, as I have observed, in their various shapes, many are resting for salvation, from the most bigoted Churchman to the most Radical Dissenter. Hundreds and thousands are resting upon these things, as a means of climbing to heaven, feeling persuaded that by their privileges and their duties they shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. And had God suffered Paul to live and die in this delusion—had he been stretched upon a deathbed the day before his journey to Damascus. I believe in my conscience, he would have gone out of life fully persuaded he was going to heaven, and never have found out his mistake till the lightnings of divine vengeance had struck his horrified soul down to eternal perdition. He was so wrapped up in a lie, that nothing but the voice of the Lord of life and glory from heaven, and the arrow of conviction from the divine quiver penetrating into his conscience, could bring him out of the delusion in which he was held so fast, and strip him out of the garment in which he was so closely wrapped.

Where Paul was, thousands are: and only a few, a remnant "according to the election of grace," the "vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory," are brought out of this state by a work of grace upon their hearts, so as to be saved in Christ with an everlasting salvation.

But having looked at Paul as he was **before** the Lord called him, let us see now,

2. What Paul was **after** the Lord called him. If you look narrowly and closely at the words of the text, you will observe two distinct tenses. "What things **were** gain to me, those I counted loss." Here we have the **past** tense. "Yea, doubtless, and **I count** all things." There we have the **present** tense. And in the last clause of the same verse, we have both the **past** and present: "For whom **I have suffered** the loss of all things, and **do count** them but dung that I may win Christ." The apostle, then, speaks of what he had felt, and does now feel—what he had suffered, and does now suffer, drawing a distinction between what he **was** in time past, and what he **is** in time present. Thus, when the Lord was pleased to arrest this persecutor on his errand of blood, and opened up to his conscience the spirituality of the law in those three days when Paul was at Damascus, he neither ate nor drank. The law was then doing its work in his conscience, shewing itself in all its strict purity; it was laying bare the hidden corruptions that had before been covered over with the varnish of profession and self-righteousness: it was stripping him, and opening up the chambers of imagery within, carrying a death stroke to everything boasted of and trusted in.

Now this, every child of God, every quickened vessel of mercy is, more or, less, brought to feel, though he may not be three days and nights, without eating or drinking, under the burning agonies of a broken law. The Lord appears to have done the work quickly in the case of Paul: and, by doing it quickly, made up by depth and intensity, while it lasted, for the short time of duration. I believe this is frequently the case with the Lord's people. All must be brought to the same point: but where the work is more rapid, it is usually more intense. The very same work of conviction and condemnation, emptying and stripping, wounding and



slaughtering, breaking down and laying low, may be spread over a number of years: and, being spread over a longer space, is not so intense in feeling as when carried on in a shorter space of time—the duration of the feeling during a longer period making up for the intensity of the feeling when carried on in a shorter space.

But, however, this was the effect—"what things were gain" to him, he was brought to count "loss for Christ." He was made to see that they were not helps, but positive hindrances. He does not say, 'I count them as little value, but as absolute loss.' To use an illustration: it is like a tradesman, who is obliged to transfer a debt which he thought to be in his favour, to the opposite side of the ledger—an account to pay, instead of to receive. Thus, when the depth of his hypocrisy was laid open, when his own righteousness was thoroughly held up to his view, when he came to see light in God's light, and had the hidden corruptions of his heart made bare—then he began to see that his former acquirements, so far from being gain, were absolute loss; that so far from being so many rounds in the ladder to take him up to the Lord, they were so many rounds in the ladder to take him deeper into the pit; that every step which he took in a way of fleshly righteousness, instead of being a step to heaven, was a step from heaven, and instead of bringing him nearer to God, carried him farther from God. So that, absolutely and actually, with all his profession, he was farther from God, in a worse state, than the malefactor upon the cross, there expiring by the strong hand of the law on account of the crimes he had done.

Now, when a man once sees this, he is brought into his right spot: and he is never brought into his right spot before. When he sees that all his religious privileges, all the doctrines his head is stored with, all his piety and uprightness, all the

consistency of life in which he had gloried: that all these things were absolutely hindrances instead of helps, really loss instead of gain: that set him farther from heaven than nearer heaven—then he drops into his right spot. But how should this be? I will tell you. Because he trusted in them. If I am going, say to the East end of the Town, and being unacquainted with the metropolis, take a turn leading to the West end, I may walk very confidently forward: but I have taken a wrong direction: and every step I take carries me from the wished-for point. I cannot get right till I turn completely round. So spiritually: while a man is traveling on in self-righteousness, every step takes him farther from heaven, and farther from the Lord Jesus Christ; and becomes to him positive and absolute loss. But till his eyes are opened to see this, he never can be in his right spot. Man will cleave to the flesh in one form or another as long as he can; he never will give it up till brought to this point, to count everything connected with the flesh not merely not as gain, but absolute loss.

3. But there was another thing wrought in the apostle's mind to bring him to this spot—a **view of the Lord of life and glory by the eye of living faith**. He had a personal knowledge in his heart and conscience of the glorious Person, atoning blood, dying love, and justifying righteousness of the precious Immanuel.

These two things are absolutely needful to bring us to the spot where the Lord brought Paul. There are two indispensable operations of the Spirit upon the heart to produce in us a saving work. All stripping will not do; all emptying will not suffice; all slaughtering is not enough. These are necessary to bring us down; but we want something else to raise us up, and bring comfort. We want something sweet and precious, as well as something bitter

and painful; the honey and the honeycomb, the milk and wine of gospel grace, as well as the gall and bitterness of sin felt in a wounded conscience. And this is summed up in the words, **"The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."** Such a sweet application, such a blessed discovery, such a divine manifestation to the eyes of the understanding, to the heart and conscience of the believer is needed, as shall bring him to know the Lord of life and glory as all his salvation and all his desire, and make him to feel in the very depths of his conscience before a heart-searching God that Jesus is in his eyes the "altogether lovely."

Now, if the Lord has made your conscience tender let me, as a friend ask you to search into your experience upon these two points. Depend upon it, they are absolutely indispensable: they are not to be smuggled over, not to be wrapped up, not to be obscured: they are to be plain and conspicuous in a man's soul. And only so far as they are plain and conspicuous in a man's soul, has he any solid testimony, any good hope through grace, that he has "the root of the matter" in him. These two points, then, must be stamped on every quickened sinner's conscience in order to give him an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God. He must have been brought down, stripped and emptied, and have put his mouth in the dust as a poor guilty sinner. And then he must have had such a discovery to the eyes of his understanding, such a revelation in his soul of the glorious Person, atoning blood, and justifying righteousness of the Lord of life and glory, as shall have raised up a measure of faith, hope, and love towards this blessed Lord; so as to create some embraces of him in the arms of affection, some cleaving to him with purpose of heart, some delight in him as altogether precious, altogether glorious, altogether lovely.

These are the two grand jewels in a believer's heart. The work of the Spirit in stripping, and the work of the Spirit in clothing; the work of the Spirit in pulling down, and the work of the Spirit in raising up; the work of the Spirit in the law, and the work of the Spirit in the gospel; the work of the Spirit in making self loathed, and the work of the Spirit in making Jesus loved.

II.—We have looked at Paul as speaking of himself in the **past tense**; let us now pass on to consider him **speaking of himself in the present tense**, or the experience he was then going through. I have before pointed out a difference in the tenses, "Yea, doubtless, and **I count** all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." If you observe, he takes here a wider scope than he had taken in the preceding verses. He said there, "**What things were gain to me:**" but he goes further in his present experience; "yea doubtless, and **I count all things.**" Before he merely counted those things to be loss that he once boasted in: but as he advanced further in the knowledge of his own heart, as he had greater discoveries of the glorious perfections of Christ, as he was led down deeper into the quagmire of felt corruption, and led higher up into views of the glorious Immanuel, he gets into another branch of spiritual arithmetic: he embraces a wider scope of calculation: he now says. "**I count all things.**" 'There was a time when I looked at many things that I highly prized, and them I counted a dead loss: but now I am brought further: for I count everything in the world loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

You see, until a man is brought into the gospel conflict, his vision is for the most part dim and obscured. There are two conflicts: one, a legal conflict; the other, a gospel conflict. While under the legal conflict, the eye is directed to the

things, which were once counted as gain; our own righteousness, our own strength, our own creature performances, our fleshly religion; and all come to nought. But when the gospel conflict comes, it is a different thing. A legal conflict is when there is no knowledge of Christ in the soul; but in a gospel conflict, we are brought to this point, not merely to count as dung and loss the things so esteemed of old, but everything in the world, however enchanting, beautiful, attractive, ensnaring, and alluring—to count all things as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

Every man has his own peculiar temptations, his own natural inclinations, his own besetments; each has his various objects of pursuit, which he makes his idol. There is the studious man bent upon languages and sciences; the industrious tradesman buried in business; the man elevated a little above the ordinary mass of God's people, striving to add to, or preserve his respectability. Each person has a disposition peculiar to himself. Now, under the law, we may renounce many things, and yet not renounce these bosom idols. We may renounce our own strength, our own righteousness, our own wisdom; renounce many things in the flesh, and put them aside; but yet, after all, a whole nest of bosom idols may be untouched. Just a few hornets may have been struck down as they buzzed out of their holes, but a whole nest of them remains in the deeps of man's depraved heart, which must be burnt out, that the Lord of life and glory may reign supreme.

Look into your heart. Have you not some idol in your bosom—your science, your business, your child, your wife, your husband? The idol self, in some shape or another? Is there not something which day after day catches your eye, entangles your feet, draws you from the Lord, overcomes

you, proves your bosom idol that you cannot master? I know it is so with me. There is one thing or another working perpetually: there is an idolatrous heart, an adulterous eye, a roving mind, a lusting imagination perpetually going after something which conscience tells me is hateful to God, and hateful to myself in my right mind.

Now, in order to be brought to the point to which God brought Paul, to esteem all things as loss, to count them as dung, and trample them under foot for the sake of the Lord of life and glory, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord," we need two distinct operations of the Spirit upon our soul. We need, first of all, to be put into the furnace; we need to have our faith tried as by fire; we need to have temptations, afflictions, perplexities, heartrending grief's and sorrows, in order to overthrow, destroy, put down, and subdue those cursed idols in our heart, which are the root of all sin. It is not your outward profession; your coming to chapel regularly; your going to hear a man preach certain doctrines, or liking to hear certain experiences traced out. A man may do all this, and yet wrap up an idol in his bosom all the week long; be wandering after his lusts all the day, and come with a smooth countenance on Lord's Day morning, as though all his heart and soul were with the Lord of life and glory.

Such is the heart of every man. We must go then into the furnace of affliction; we must have trials, exercises, perplexities, the sharp rod of chastisement, painful, sometimes heartrending afflictions, to pluck up these dunghill gods, and overthrow these idols in our heart. This is the reason why so many of God's people are in affliction—why one has such a suffering body; another, such trying circumstances; a third, such rebellious children; a fourth, such a persecuting husband; a fifth, such opposition from the

world; a sixth, such temptations from the devil; a seventh, such an acquaintance with the awful corruptions of his heart: an eighth, such a desponding mind: a ninth, such shattered nerves. I say this is the reason why they have this painful discipline, that they may not lean upon Egypt or Assyria because they are but broken reeds that will run into their hands and pierce them.

But besides these, there is another thing wanted, that is, greater discoveries, more openings up, sweeter revelations, more enlarged manifestations of the glory, grace, love, blood, preciousness and beauty of Immanuel: so as not merely to put down idolatry, not merely to overcome this master sin in them, but to substitute an Object of spiritual worship, and raise up in their heart the actings of heavenly affection and love.

Here then is the difference. In the legal conflict, there is the law killing, cursing, and condemning. But in the gospel conflict, there are furnaces, floods, troubles, temptations, exercises, perplexities, and sorrows. All these things lay a man lower than ever he was laid before, bring him down more into the dust, and thus make a way for larger openings up of the gospel, more glorious discoveries of salvation through Jesus, and greater sweetness, preciousness, and suitability in him. The superaboundings of grace become thus more manifested over the aboundings of sin; and this experience will purge out that which the law never touched, and clear out of the heart those idols that the commandment had not effectually put down. This lifts up the Lord of life and glory in the soul, that he may be, as the apostle says, "our Lord"—"**for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord**"—to worship him as our Lord, to cleave to him as our Lord, to glory in him as our Lord—to give up ourselves, with all the affections of our souls, into his hands.

But to be brought here, the apostle says, "he had suffered the loss of all things." Worldly prospects, fleshly joys, human honours, lucrative gains, the esteem of my fellow-creatures, the esteem of my own heart, that more delicious morsel than the esteem of others—I have suffered "the loss of all these things." 'But do I repent of it.'? do I regret it? do I murmur at it? do I kick at the hand that has stripped me?' 'No,' says the apostle, I count them all dung, that defiles my feet if it but touch them: things only fit to be cast to the dogs: mere offal in the street, that I turn my eyes away from.' O what an experience is this! How few, and how rarely those few, come to this spot to be brought in solemn moments before God to have such a taste of the beauty, preciousness and love of Jesus—to have such a going forth of holy affection to his bosom, as absolutely to count all things but as dung! Where is the man to be found who knows much of this? And if you find the man, how long is he there? It was doubtless with Paul a far more enduring feeling than with any of us. But how many of us can say, 'Such is the daily bent of our minds, such the hourly experience of our hearts'? I dare not say it. There have been times when just for a short half-hour, a transient period, a very transient one, I have felt it. But to say, that this is my or your experience daily and hourly—to count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord—where is the man? where is the woman?—in London, or the country?—who can rise up to this height of glorious and blessed experience? We must indeed know something of it, have a measure of the very same experience, though different in degree, or we have nothing. But as for rising up into a full measure of it, I have never seen the man yet who comes even up to the tenth part of it—to "count all things but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord!" And, for that to be his daily, hourly experience—I have never yet fastened my eyes



upon either the man or the woman who could enter into such depths, or such heights of experience as this. Do not misunderstand me. There are seasons, there are moments, when it is felt; but to have it of an enduring nature, abiding with a man through the week, accompanying him all day, going with him to bed, getting up with him the morning, continuing with him through all his hourly occupations—I have not seen the man yet, who could ever come near by a thousand leagues thus to experience what the apostle Paul declared he felt an abiding reality in his bosom.

III.—But we pass on to consider, **what Paul hoped, and what he wanted to be.** If you observe, he gives us, lower down, some intimation that all God's family were not thus perfect. He says, "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect"—that is, adult, matured in the divine life—"be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded"—as though he saw that all to whom he wrote were not in his experience, had not attained to this height—"God shall reveal even this unto you." 'Be not discouraged and cast down: God is able to reveal it in your heart, and work it in your soul's experience.' "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained"—each according to his own measure—"let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Let us have our eyes fixed upon the same point. Let us not suppose there is one rule for man, and another rule for another man. We must all have our eyes fixed upon the same thing. I allow of degrees, but I allow of no difference—an experience similar, though not the same—not differing in nature, although it may differ in degree or circumstance.

He was looking forward, then, to something future. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not

myself to have apprehended"—I do not know all that is to be known; I have not felt all that is to be felt; I have not experienced all that is to be experienced—"but this one thing I do"—like a racer running a race—"forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Now, what were the two things that he was aiming at? One was, **that he might win Christ**; and the other, **that he might be found in him**. These were what he hoped to enjoy. These were what he was pressing forward to obtain. This was the ultimatum of his wishes. This was the goal towards which his anxious steps were pressing.

1. **"That I might win Christ."** What is the meaning of the words? Nothing short of a personal enjoyment of Christ in the soul. Nothing short of seeing him on earth by the eye of faith. Nothing short of seeing him as he is, in open vision, in the realms of glory above. I cannot allow for a single moment, that any other explanation will suffice for the expression, 'to win Christ.' Christ in the heart here—Christ in heaven hereafter. Christ seen by the eye of faith below—Christ seen by the eye of open vision above. Christ embraced and enjoyed in the arms of love and affection upon earth—Christ beheld for ever in the realms of endless bliss without a shadow between.

These, then, are the two things that every quickened soul is pressing on to obtain—"to win Christ; and to be found in him." What is my religion? Can I rest in that? What is my experience? Can I rest in that? What my consistency? Can I rest in that? What my knowledge? Can I rest in that? What my ability, my gifts, my understanding, my education, my enlightened views? Can I rest in them? If I do, it will be to

my confusion. They will be found a bed too short, and a covering too narrow. On what can I rest, short of the Lord of life and glory? I never have been able to rest in anything short of him. I hope never to be able to rest in anything short of him.

But what is it to "win Christ?" It is to have him sweetly embraced in the arms of our faith. It is to feel him manifesting his heavenly glory in our souls. It is to have the application of his atoning blood, in all its purging efficacy, to our conscience. It is to feel our heart melted and swooning with the sweet ravishments of his dying love, shed abroad even to overpowering. This is winning Christ. Now, before we can thus win Christ, we must have a view of Christ, we must behold his glory, "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We must see the matchless dignity of his glorious Person, the atoning efficacy of his propitiating blood, the length and breadth, the depth and height, of his surpassing love. We must have our heart ready to burst with pantings, longings, and ardent desires that this blessed Immanuel would come down from the heaven of heavens in which he dwells beyond the veil, into our heart, and shed abroad his precious dying love there.

Now, is not this your feeling, child of God? It has been mine, over and over again. Is it not your feeling as you lie upon your bed, sometimes, with sweet and earnest pantings after the Lord of life and glory? As you walk by the way, as you are engaged in your daily business, as you are secretly musing and meditating, are there not often the goings forth of these longings and breathings into the very bosom of the Lord? But you cannot have this, unless you have seen him by the eye of an enlightened understanding, by the eye of faith, and had a taste of his beauty, a glimpse of his glory, and a discovery of his eternal preciousness. You must have had this

gleaming upon your eyes, as the beams of light gleam through the windows. You must have had it dancing into your heart, as the rays of the sun dance upon the waves of the sea. You must have had a sweet incomming of the shinings of eternal light upon your soul, melting it, and breaking it down at his footstool, as the early dawn pierces through the clouds of night. When you have seen and felt this you break forth— 'O that I might win Christ!' Like the ardent lover who longs to win his bride, you long to enjoy his love and presence shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost.

But besides this winning him, enjoying him, having sweet discoveries of him, and swooning away in the arms of his blessed embracement below, there is a winning of him in glory; a being with him face to face; such a personal and individual enjoyment of him, in one's body and soul, as though there were not another saint in heaven; as though all the inexhaustible love of Immanuel, "God with us," were given to, and fixed upon one, and there was no other in heaven to love but that individual saint! So to win him, as the bride wins the bridegroom; so to win him, as to be with him for ever when time shall be no more! Now, nothing short of this will ever satisfy a Christian; nothing short of this will do for a living soul; nothing short of this will fill up the unbounded desires of an immortal spirit.

2. **"And be found in him."** The apostle knew a time was coming when God would search Jerusalem as with candles. He knew a day was hastening on when the secrets of all hearts would be revealed. He knew an hour was approaching when the eyes of the Lord would try, and the eyelids of the righteous Judge would weigh the words and actions of men. And he knew in his own soul's experience, that all who, in that awful day, were not found in Christ, would be consigned to the eternal pit of woe. He knew that when the Judge took

his seat upon the great white throne, and heaven and earth fled away from his presence, no one could stand before his look of infinite justice and eternal purity, but those who had a vital standing in the Son of God. And therefore, looking to that awful time, and the solemnities of that day of judgment, that day of wonders, this was the desire of his soul—and towards that he pressed forward, as an active runner presses towards the goal—"that he might be found in him;" that when the Lord comes a second time to judgment, and his eyes run over the assembled myriads, he might be found in the Man who is "a refuge from the storm, and the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," the only Saviour from the wrath to come, which will one day burst upon the world. "Be found in him."—having a vital union to him—in him, as vitally as the branch is in the vine—in him, as actually as the limbs are in the body—in him, by an eternal, vital, and indefeasible union.

But he knew, that if he were found in him, he would have on a robe of righteousness such as the eyes of infinite Purity would accept. "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,"—a cobweb garment, full of rents and tatters, which cannot shelter deep-dyed, stained, and defiled nature from the penetrating eye of infinite Purity. But as a beggar's dirty skin is seen through a beggar's tattered rags, he knew that if he stood in creature righteousness, the eye of infinite Justice would look through the rents and tatters of that creature righteousness, and see the black hue of depraved nature through those rents and tatters.

And he knew that if God saw sin in him—if there were no garment to cover his naked skin—the eye of infinite Purity would dash him down into eternal flames. Therefore he says, "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law"—a cobweb garment, a thing of rags and tatters, a patchwork

counterpane—"but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"; that is, the righteousness of the God-man—the pure, perfect, and spotless obedience of Immanuel, "God with us," received by the hand of living faith in the soul, and the enjoyment of it communicated to the heart through the operation of the faith of God's elect: that I might have that righteousness "which is through the faith of Christ," put upon my person, imputed to me, considered as my own, by my believing in Jesus, by my receiving him into my heart, by my looking wholly and solely unto him, by my implicit dependence upon him—"the righteousness which is of God," by the appointment of God, wrought out by Immanuel, "God with us," and owned and accepted by God the Father, as a righteousness justifying all those that are found clothed in it.

Now I would ask whether you and I can lay down our feelings and our experience side by side with the experience and feelings of the apostle here? Thank God, I can in some measure find a similarity in my feelings, and a oneness in my experience with what the apostle has laid down as felt by himself in the text. 'There was a time,' say also some of you 'when I trusted in the flesh, was very religious, very pious, very consistent, and was thought to be a very good Christian: and had I so lived, and so died. I had then no doubt I should go to heaven.' But there was a change. You had the slaughtering-knife thrust into your heart to let out the lifeblood of natural religion. Then convinced, convicted, hewed down, and made to feel that in you, that is in your flesh, dwelt no good thing: and therefore, that all your righteousnesses were as filthy rags, and that you could not save yourself by anything you could say or do: you were brought down in contrition of spirit to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Then, did you ever have a discovery of Jesus? some manifestation of the Lord to your soul? some gleams, glances, glimpses, and shinings in of heavenly rays? some liftings up? some sweet tokens? some comforting views of the Son of God in his beauty and glory? And did these produce this feeling in your soul?—Away with everything but Jesus! All my own righteousness, all my own attainments, all my idols, all my bosom sins, all that nature loves and the flesh cleaves to—I count them all but loss, I esteem them all but dung, that I would scarcely touch with my foot to kick it away. This, in solemn moments, is the heartfelt desire of my soul—to win Christ by a sweet manifestation of his dying love; to see him as he is in glory; and when he sits upon the great white throne, to be found in him, having a vital union to him, clothed in his righteousness, washed in his blood, and justified through the faith which is in him.'

Now, no experience short of this is worth a single thought. Nothing short of this operation of God the Spirit upon a sinner's conscience, is worth the name of religion. It is only another form of the deceitful flesh; it is only another delusion of Satan as an angel of light; it is but a garment too short, and a bed too narrow; and it will leave the soul that lives and dies wrapped up in it, to the awful judgment of an angry God, who is "a consuming fire."

Look to it, you who desire to fear God, whether you can find anything of this experience in your heart and conscience. A grain of it will save you, if you can find a grain; but if you have none of it, you may be the acutest critic of doctrinal truth, the most consistent character, the most confident professor in the world—it will never save you. If you live and die in a religion of the flesh, you will live and die with a lie in your right hand.

The Lord mercifully keeps us from being deluded! The Lord will keep his people: for the promise is, "He will keep the feet of his saints." So that the Lord of life and glory will say when he stands before the Father at the last day, surrounded by his ransomed millions, "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me." "Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost nothing!"