

"CHRIST IS ALL"

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all." Colossians 3:11.

From Epaphras, a citizen of Colossae and Paul's fellow-worker, the Apostle heard about the heresy which seriously threatened the spiritual life of the Colossian Christians. This heresy had been brought to them by certain misguided teachers, whose teaching was a mixture of Judaism and Oriental philosophy. They insisted that the ordinances of Moses should be observed, that angels had a part in the work of creation and redemption, and therefore they should be worshiped.

Paul taught the Colossians the preeminency of Christ--that in Him dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and that believers are complete in Him. He contended that there was no need to turn aside to vain philosophy, to the worship of angels, or to the practice of asceticism in order to be sanctified. His letter to them is summarized in the words of our text, "Christ is all." These three words are the very essence of Christianity. Christ is sufficient for every need of every soul. He is the keystone to the arch of Christian character.

When the enemies of our Lord turn upon us and tauntingly inquire what we have to offer this weary and disillusioned world, we can reply, "Christ is all." When we are asked to give the reason for the hope that is within us, we can answer, "Christ is all."

Out of the crucible of human experience comes the unvarying testimony--"Christ is all." How familiar and how famous is that marvelous statement! It sets before us the infinite significance of the Christ.

I. Christ Is All In Creation.

The vast fabric of created things sprang into being at His word. Out of nothing He created all that is. "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3). He made the stars, kindled their brilliant fires, fixed their rank, regulated their motions and appointed their mission. He formed the earth, robed it in vestments of ever-changing beauty and endowed it with unfailing productiveness. He fashioned man after the model of His own illustrious image, freighted him with faculties of wondrous compass, indicated the possibilities of his career and the character of his destiny.

II. Christ Is All In The Bible.

It matters not where you open the Bible, you will find Christ. It is Jesus Christ all the way from Genesis to Malachi. When you open the New Testament, you will find that it is Christ in the parables, Christ in the miracles, Christ in the gospels, Christ in the epistles and Christ in the trumpet peal of the Apocalypse.

In Adam you see Him as the head and representative of His people; in Noah, as the restorer of the new world; in Isaac, as a burnt offering; in Joseph, as humbled and exalted and the saviour of his father's house; in Aaron, as a high priest; in Moses, as a lawgiver; in Joshua, as the leader and commander of the people; in Solomon, as the prince of peace; in Jonah, rising again the third day.

It was Christ crucified who was set forth in every Old Testament sacrifice. It was Christ to whom Abel looked when he offered a better sacrifice than Cain, of whom Enoch prophesied in the days of abounding wickedness before the flood, to whom Abraham looked when he dwelt in tents in the land of promise, of whom Jacob spoke to his sons as he lay dying, and of whom all the prophets spoke and wrote. It is Christ with whom the

whole New Testament is filled. In the gospels He lives among men; in the Acts He is proclaimed, and in the Epistles He is explained and exalted.

III. Christ Is All In Salvation.

Our hearts are strangely moved when we contemplate Calvary. There Christ revealed God's estimate of sin. It revealed to us man's need and God's love. It is the only place where man's need and God's love can meet. The tragedy of Calvary was not the death of a mere man. It was Emmanuel's blood that flowed on Calvary.

"They pierced the Prince of Glory there,
Upon the cruel tree;
His blood flowed out a healing stream,
To save a wretch like me.
Upon the Cross, O can it be,
The Prince of Glory bled for me?
Between two thieves He suffered so,
To save my soul--from death and woe."

Well may we sing:

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

"Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.

"E'er since, by faith, I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

"Then in a nobler, sweeter song,
I'll sing Thy power to save,
When this poor lisping, stamm'ring tongue
Lies silent in the grave."

It is said that when Martin Luther realized for the first time the truth of the doctrine of justification by faith, he was found kneeling before the crucifix and sobbing, "For me! For me!" If only we could realize what Calvary really means and what Christ really suffered that He might redeem us and reconcile us to God by the blood of His cross, who among us would not prostrate himself at His feet, sob out the confession of his sins there, and pour out his heart in profoundest gratitude for such great redemption?

Alfred Tennyson once asked an aged woman what was in the news. She replied, "Why, Mr. Tennyson, there is only one piece of news that I know--that Christ died for all men." Mr. Tennyson said to her, "That is old news, and good news, and new news." This is the

only news for our broken-hearted, sinning, suffering and dying humanity. All the good news of the glorious gospel of Christ can be summed up in one matchless statement: "Christ died for our sins." The testimony of all who have come to salvation by way of the cross is gloriously borne by that gifted scientist, dying yonder sometime ago, who was asked, "What is the greatest discovery that you have ever made?" He quickly replied, "That Christ is my Saviour." This shall be our message until the final step of our journey, and, when we come at last to the late afternoon of earth's last day, we may say with the dying woman who was asked--"What is your hope now?" and who pointed to the Bible on the bedside table, and then to her heart, and then upward toward heaven, and said, "Christ in the Bible, Christ in my heart, and Christ in heaven."

"I've tried in vain a thousand ways,
My fears to quell, my hopes to raise,
But what I need the Bible says--Is Jesus.

"My soul is night, my heart is steel,
I cannot see, I cannot feel,
For light, for life, I must appeal--To Jesus.

"Though some will mock, and some will blame,
In spite of fear, in spite of shame,
I'll go to Him because His name--Is Jesus.

"He died, He lives, He reigns, He pleads,
There's love in all His words and deeds,
And all, yes, all a sinner needs--Is Jesus."

Yes, He is abundantly able to supply every sinner's needs. But remember, there is no substitute for Him or any salvation apart from Him. Christ is the one and only Saviour.

IV. Christ Is All In Life's Reverses.

One of the staggering and baffling facts that confronts humanity is life's reverses. The earnest words of counsel of an aged preacher to the young ministers at his bedside were these words, "Preach to troubled hearts. Many in your congregation have suffered losses and their hearts are heavy. They are looking for comfort. Don't forget to put something in your message for troubled hearts." Surely there is a message for such troubled hearts.

Christ supplies the grace that is needed for every experience of life. There is not an example anywhere in all the history of humanity where Christ has ever forsaken His own, or failed to care for them in any and every situation in life. In Him all fulness dwells. He is answerable to every condition. Christ still meets the countless needs of men. He is adequate to the needs of every individual. He is a Physician to heal, a Counsellor to advise, a King to govern, a Friend to sympathize and a Father to provide. He is the Shadow from heat, the Bread of Life, the Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness. He is the great Emancipator who delivers from the power of darkness and translates the benighted but groping soul into the kingdom of light. He defends and succours the tempted. He gives rest to the weary and the heavy laden. He is a refuge in every time of distress.

A drunken man was lying on the sidewalk one day, too drunk to go farther. An aged lady came by, and, looking down, she recognized the drunken man. He had been in her Sunday School class when he was a little lad. In his young manhood, he had been a fine young lawyer, but sin had gained control of his life, and he had now lost his friends, his clients, his home and his reputation. His wife had been forced to take their half-clad

children to her father's home that they might have bread, leaving the husband and father living alone in a dingy little rooming house in the tenement quarters. The lady gazed in pity on the miserable man whom she had known from his childhood. Stooping down, she put her gentle hand on his brow, and calling him by his given name, said to him, "Christ can give you back all that you have lost." This was all she said, and she walked away. But the drunkard heard these words ringing over and over in his ears. After a while he struggled to his feet, staggered down the street to his room, and threw himself across the bed. Over and over the words rang through his mind--"Christ can give you back all that you have lost." He finally knelt beside his bed and sought forgiveness and promised the Saviour that if He would help him, and give back to him some of the things he had lost, he would serve him faithfully until the end of life's day. The prayer of that poor sinner was heard. God gave him friends, clients, success in his profession, his home and his family, and he and his household served the Lord faithfully. Yes, Christ can give us back what we have lost.

In Him is all the believer needs when trouble comes. He has a message of comfort for troubled hearts. He can give that sympathy for which our hearts crave. We know from experience that Christ is the only perfect sympathizer. Others can help when the dark hour comes, but only Christ can comfort in such an hour of dire distress. He is so precious to us when we pass through the valley of bereavement.

"There's one who can comfort when all else fails,
Jesus, Blessed Jesus;
A Saviour who saves though the foe assails,
Jesus, Blessed Jesus;
Once He traveled the way we go,
Felt the pangs of deceit and woe;
Who more perfectly then can know,
Than Jesus, Blessed Jesus.

"He never forsakes in the darkest hour,
Jesus, Blessed Jesus;
His arm is around us with keeping power,
Jesus, Blessed Jesus:
When we enter the Shadow-land,
When at Jordan we trembling stand,
He will meet us with outstretched hand,
This Jesus, Blessed Jesus."

V. Christ Is All In And Beyond Death.

Life's great adventure is at the Western Gate. Men have looked in that direction from the days of Abel and have asked many questions as to what lies beyond the sunset. Christianity has done much to dwindle down the dread of death.

The journey home is not such a long road for the Christian. There is but a step between us and death and that step is not made alone. The comfort of the psalmist is our comfort all the way home as well as at the end of the shadow of death--"I will fear no evil for thou art with me." Many faithful Christians have testified as they went away that the Saviour was with them.

Theodosia, the Countess of Powerscourt, was one of the greatest saints who ever walked on Irish soil. She lived a life of union with God, but the time came when in the Castle of Powerscourt the Countess had to die. A friend who was very intimate with her came

into her bedroom, and the Countess looked at her and said, "Oh, it is splendid." "What is splendid?" said her friend. "Why," said she, "the doctor was here this morning, and told me I had only twenty-four hours to live. It is splendid, only twenty-four hours to live, and then I shall fall asleep in my dear Saviour, and I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness. Good-bye, my darling; it is splendid." That is how the Countess died. She was one who had made Christ all.

Approaching the hour of death, Foster Rutherford said of Jesus: "He has indeed been a precious Christ to me; and now I feel Him to be my rock, my strength, my rest, my hope, my joy, my all in all."

We do not know what awaits us beyond the river of death. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." We do know some things, however, and with these we comfort our hearts. We know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We know that we shall have another and better building when this earthly house is taken down. We know that it is far better over there than it is here. Paul said, "To depart and be with Christ is far better." We also know that many things that trouble us here will be left behind when we journey into that better land. We know that the faithful of all ages are there. We know that many of our loved ones are there, for we saw them walk the heavenly way when they were here, and we heard their testimony just before they left us. But the greatest consolation of all for us is the fact that we shall be forever with the Lord. Whatever the surprises of the unfolding ages, we shall walk fearlessly onward with Him.