

PAUL APPREHENDED AND APPREHENDING

NO. 2315

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 2, 1893
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
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“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.”
Philippians 3:12

OBSERVE the apostle's condition when he wrote these words. I do not think that either you or I will be found to be in a better one. If any are, or think they are, I would suggest a question. I, for my part, would be satisfied to be just as Paul was.

He was in a position of conscious safety. He was a saved man, he knew that he was saved, for he rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh. He knew that he was justified by faith in Christ Jesus and he counted all his own works, which formerly were his ground of trust, to be as dross and dung, that he might win Christ. He was a saved man and he knew it.

I do not think that he often had doubts about that point, but yet he was in a state of conscious imperfection, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected.” He had not yet reached his own ideal of what a Christian might be. He had not yet obtained from Christ all that he expected to obtain. He was not sitting down to rest and be thankful, but he was still hurrying on, reaching after something which was yet beyond him. He could not say, “Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years,” but he still felt his own spiritual poverty, and he cried, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfected.”

But beloved, let not that thought be any kind of solace to you, for I would remind you that, though consciously imperfect, Paul was zealously making progress. He says, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” I know many who say that they are imperfect and they seem to be quite satisfied to be so. That was never the case with the apostle—as long as any trace of a sinful nature or a sinful tendency remained in him, it made him cry out, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

It was not because he was dead in sin that he cried in that way. It would be a new thing in this world for a sinner dead in sin to cry so, but because he was already largely delivered from sin and the reigning power of it had been broken, therefore he felt the burden of any sort of contact with sin. A man who is in the sea, deep down under the water, taking a plunge, does not feel the weight of the water. But bring him out on the shore, put a great tub of water on his head, and see what a weight that is to him. So, while a man is in sin as his element, it is no burden to him, but when he is out of it, and not under its power, then he feels the weight of it, he grows weary under it and would fain be rid of every particle of it.

The apostle, I say, was conscious of imperfection, but he was also conscious that he was making progress, that he was running towards a mark, that he was leaving much behind him, and was pressing toward that which was before him. He was also in a state of anxious aspiration. He desired that he might be found in Christ, that he might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead, that he might, in a word, grasp that for which Christ had grasped him. I am going to talk about that double grasp tonight, “That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus,”

Notice that there are two forces here mentioned which are at work in every gracious man. There is Christ's power by which He apprehends us and then there is the new power, the new life of God-given

faith, by which we, in our turn, seek to apprehend that for which Christ has apprehended us. Christ has apprehended us for a purpose—we wish to realize that purpose even to the full. That is the intent of the apostle's words. Let us consider them in detail.

I. First, let us think of PAUL'S APPREHENSION BY CHRIST JESUS.

We do not often use the word, "apprehended," now, in the sense in which it is here used. The only instance that I remember is when we speak of a policeman apprehending a person, that is, laying hold upon him, seizing him.

At his conversion, *Paul had been apprehended by his Lord*. Take the word "apprehend" in the sense of arresting him, and it stands true of Saul of Tarsus. I need not repeat the story—you all know how that desperate rebel was going down to Damascus to persecute the saints of God. Nothing was further from his mind than the thought of becoming a Christian, but while he was riding the high horse and Damascus lay below him, just like a sheep within reach of a wolf, the Lord Jesus Christ stepped in and laid His hand on his shoulder.

*"Thus the eternal counsel ran,
'Almighty grace, arrest that man!'"*

And almighty grace did arrest him.

He fell to the earth at the first blow. He was blinded with the second. Nay, not so much by a blow as by the greatness of the light that shone round about him. And there he lay prostrate, broken in heart, and blind in eye, and he had to be led into the city, and one of those poor men whom he had determined to hale to prison had to come and pray for him, that his eyes might be opened, that he might be baptized, and that he might thus make his confession of faith in Christ.

He well says that he was "apprehended of Christ Jesus." The King sent no sheriff's officer to arrest him, but He came Himself, and took him into divine custody, laid him by the heels for three days in the dark, and then let him out into glorious liberty, an altogether changed man, to go forth to preach that faith which aforetime he had sought to destroy.

You may not all be able to remember any special day when you were apprehended by Christ, but some of us do. We remember when we, who had been formerly carried captive by the devil at his will, found ourselves arrested by One stronger than Satan. We did manage, by divine grace, to escape from the clutches of the devil, but we could not escape from that dear pierced hand when once it was laid upon us. We surrendered ourselves prisoners. There was no resisting any longer when His mighty grace came in to arrest us. I say that some of us remember that day. Other days, notable for great events, have been forgotten, but the day when we were apprehended of Christ Jesus is stamped upon our memory, and always must be, even throughout eternity.

Since then, dear friends, we have always felt that grip, just as *Paul ever felt himself in Christ's grasp*. We have never got away from that one arrest. It was not the work of a few minutes, and to be remembered, but to be then ended and all over. No, at this moment we feel the same divine hand upon us. We are prisoners, this day, unto Christ, who alone has set us free by capturing us.

There was a legend, among the heathen of old times, that if persons saw certain spirits in the wood, they became, from that moment, wonderfully changed—they became possessed by the spirit which they saw. They had, as we say in our language, a twist. I remember when—

*"I saw One hanging on a tree,
In agonies and blood,
Who fix'd His languid eyes on me,
As near His cross I stood;"*

and I have had a twist ever since. I never got over it and never expect to. I hope that twist will get more and more powerful hold over me. It turned everything upside down. It changed the right into the left. It

made the bitter sweet and the sweet bitter—the light darkness, and the darkness light. It was a wonderful twist and as I say again, that twist still continues.

Where it has once been experienced, there is no escaping from it. We can say, not only, “I was apprehended,” but as the text has it, “I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” He still binds us with the fetters of His love. We still sit at His dear feet, enthralled by His beauties. We are still under the omnipotent fascination of His altogether lovely face. We could not depart from Him if we would and we would not if we could. If we went away from Christ, to whom should we go? He has the words of eternal life. His love holds and binds us faster than fetters of brass. We must forever be apprehended by Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, beloved, *this arrest of Paul by Christ was the force and motive of his whole after life.* Because Paul had been apprehended by Christ, he began to live differently from what he had ever lived before. He had an apprehension that he had lived amiss. He had an apprehension that his evil life would end in eternal destruction. He fled away from all his apprehensions of the wrath to come, to the Christ who had apprehended him in quite another sense. He had thus been apprehended, pressed into the service of Christ, and made by that pressure to become a volunteer, for here there is a paradox—all Christ’s soldiers are pressed men and volunteers, too.

There are two senses, the one in which grace constrains them, and the other in which their will, being made truly free, runs delightfully after Christ. But having once been apprehended, the apostle never shook off Christ’s grasp, but he began to live as an apprehended man. He said to himself, “I cannot follow the world, for Christ has apprehended me. I cannot go after false doctrine, for Christ has apprehended me and crucified me with Himself. I cannot cease to preach the Gospel. I cannot become a self-seeker. I cannot do anything but live for Him who died for me, for the Master has apprehended me. He has put me under parole to keep close to Him forever and I must not, cannot, dare not, would not, leave Him. I am His apprehended one henceforth and even forever.”

I want your hearts to talk over this first part of the sermon. Never mind my faltering tongue—let your own hearts speak. If Christ has never apprehended you, well then, you have nothing to do with this matter and you may leave it alone. But if He has arrested you, own the soft impeachment tonight. Say in your heart, “Yes, He has indeed laid hold on me and my heart’s desire is that He would bring every thought into captivity to Him. From henceforth I would be led in triumph by Him, His captive all the days of my life, to show the power of His illustrious love, the victories of His grace.” Oh, that we might, each one, say with Paul, “I am apprehended of Christ Jesus”!

Ah, dear souls, you who have never been apprehended of Him, I hope that you will be tonight! I pray God that you may run away from your old master the devil, and not give him even five minutes’ notice, but just start off directly. And while you are a runaway slave, may my divine Master come and lay His hand upon you, and say, “You are Mine. You never did really belong to your old master and even though you promised and swore that you would be his, thus says the Lord, ‘Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.’ I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name, you are Mine, and now I only take what I bought on the tree. I take by power, by might, by main force, by grace, what I purchased with the blood of My hands and feet and heart. I will have you, for you are Mine.” Lord, will You thus arrest some sinner tonight, to the praise of the glory of Your grace!

II. Now let us notice PAUL’S DESIRE TO APPREHEND THAT FOR WHICH THE LORD HAD APPREHENDED HIM.

Well, why did Christ apprehend Paul? First, it was *to convert him completely*—to make a new man of him, to turn him from all his old ways and pursuits, and put him on quite a different road. Now, brothers and sisters, that is why the Lord apprehended us—to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus. Let us pray God to carry out that design to the full, to make us altogether new creatures. Do not let us be satisfied while there are any remains of the old nature—let us cry to the Lord to drive the Canaanites out—and though they have chariots of iron, let us, by divine grace, drive them all out. Pray, “Lord Jesus,

You have come to turn me from every sin—turn me and I shall be turned. You have provided medicine for every disease—Lord, heal me and I shall be healed.”

Do not be satisfied, any of you, with half a conversion. I am afraid that there are a great many who have not much more than half a conversion. I know a man—I hope he is converted, but I wish that the Lord would convert his temper. He prays very nicely, but you should see him when he is red in the face with anger at his wife. I know a man—I hope he is a Christian, it is not for me to judge—but I wish that the Lord would convert his pocket. It needs a button taken off, for it is very difficult to get it open. It is very easy to put something in, but hard to get anything out for any good purpose.

I know a great many professing Christians who do not seem to have had what we might call a thorough conversion. We want the power, which has arrested us, to do its work completely—till there is not any part of us but what has been renewed by grace, and sanctified to the service and glory of God. Brethren, seek to apprehend that for which Christ has apprehended you, namely, a thorough conversion, a turning of yourself from every evil way.

But the Lord apprehended each one of His people, in the next place, *to make them like to Christ*. This is the great design of electing love, “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” That is the great object of the very first act of divine love—and whatever the Holy Spirit does in us, He does it with this aim, to make us like unto the Firstborn among many brethren. This will be our satisfaction in eternity, “I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.”

Come, then, beloved, if Christ has arrested us to make us like Himself, let us not rest till we have become more like Him. Perhaps the Lord has made you like Christ in some respects, but not in all. Or if you are like Christ in all respects, yet the likeness is dim, shadowy, rather in outline than in filling-up. Though we may be likenesses of Christ, there is not one of us who does not need many touches before we shall be good likenesses. Some, I fear, are caricatures of Christ. May the Lord have pity upon us if that is the case, and go on with His work, and take out all the blotches and blemishes, and paint the true portrait, till at last everybody who sees us will say, “There is Christ in that man—he is a likeness of Christ”!

We may not all be paintings on ivory. We may not all be taken on a sheet of silver, but the Lord’s portrait, even though it is on a piece of clay, has still great beauties in it. And as He intends to make us like Christ, O beloved, let us aspire to this! Come, get it into your voice and get it into your heart! You are to be like Christ and as you are to be so, and this is the very reason why Christ has arrested you, pine after it, thirst after it, labor after it. Trust God to work in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure, and while He is doing that, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that works in you.

If you turn to Paul’s description of his own conversion, which he gave to Agrippa, you will find that the Lord said to him that He had appeared to him *to make him a witness* of that which he had seen, and of that which He would afterwards reveal to him. So, in the third place, we have been apprehended of Christ that we may be witnesses for Him, first seeing a great deal and then telling what we have seen, which is the other sense of the word “witness.”

A witness sees or hears, and then he tells in court what he has seen or heard, and so he becomes a witness to others as once he was a witness to himself. Now, the Lord has apprehended every Christian here, to see his Savior, to see His grace, to see His love, to see His power, to see all the wonders which the Holy Spirit works among men, and then to go and talk of these things to others, that they also, hearing from the lips of a witness, may be led to believe by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Beloved, if the Lord Jesus Christ has apprehended you that you may be a witness, be on the lookout, keep your eyes open. See all that you can see. Every prophet of olden times was called a seer. You cannot prophesy to others until you have been a seer yourself. Pray that you may see all that is in the Word. Cry, “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”

Pray that you may see the movements of God in providence, and may see the hand of God in your own heart and your own experience. Pray God first to make you a witness, an observer—and then tell out to others what you have tasted and handled and felt of the Word of life, and be a faithful witness for your Lord and Master all your days.

Do not some professing Christians, who are here tonight, feel a little uncomfortable? You have not yet seen all that you should see and have you not kept very much to yourselves what you have seen? I would that you could apprehend that for which also you are apprehended of Christ Jesus, seeing what He means you to see, and then telling out what He means you to tell. The Lord instruct us more and more that we may fulfill all His good pleasure!

But next, we were converted in order *to be the instruments of the conversion of others*. Paul, when he was speaking to Agrippa, expressly mentioned how the Lord said, “Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”

So, you see, there was a certain number of souls for whom Paul was apprehended that he might be the instrument of their salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”

Now, that power Christ distributes among His people. There is a certain number of persons who will receive eternal life through my ministry. There is a certain number who will receive eternal life through another man’s ministry. I wonder how many have, in this way, been appointed to you, that you might be the means of their salvation? You were not saved that you might go to heaven alone—you were saved that you might take others there with you.

In the olden days, when a man wanted pigeons, he used to take a dove of his own and smear its wings all over with perfume, and then, when it was very sweet to smell, he threw it up into the air and it went into other dovecots, and all the pigeons went after it. And when it came back, it brought them home to its master. That was a roguish trick, but it is a blessed method of bringing poor flying doves to Christ. When your wings are sweet with Christ’s love, when every time that you move you perfume the air with holiness and mercy and grace, others will flock around you and fly with you like doves to their windows.

I like to think of the many that God has appointed me to bring to Him. I cannot tell you how many I have met during the past week—they have made my heart dance for joy. Last Tuesday, when we had a large company of deacons of our Metropolitan churches here, one would steal up to me, as I sat there shaking hands, and say, “On such a day, I heard you preach from such a text. I was a careless young man, but you brought me to the Savior.”

Another would come and say, “God bless you, sir! I remember when you were the means of leading me to the Savior.” One took my hand with a ferocious grip and could not say a word till he had shed many a tear. These things make us very happy and my heart’s desire is that I may get all that Christ means me to get, if that I may apprehend all that for which He apprehended me.

I want every Christian brother and sister here to feel the same. There is somebody in the world whom you have to bring to Christ. I do not know where he is, or who he is, but you had better look out for him. Come, seek now. Say, “I would not lose a single pearl, though it lies deep under the waves of the sea, if my great Lord intends me to dive for it, and bring it up into the light.” Get to your searching after the hidden treasures and be intent day and night, in the power of the Spirit, that you may apprehend that measure of usefulness for which you were apprehended of Christ Jesus.

It will be a high honor to appear at last as a winner of souls. Kings might doff their diadems and forget that they ever wore them, in comparison with that crown which God will give to those who turn many to righteousness, for they shall shine “as the stars for ever and ever.” Aspire to this, my dear friends, and lose none of those for which you have been apprehended of Christ Jesus your Lord.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read that the Lord said to Ananias about Paul, “I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” Well, now, some of you were apprehended on purpose *that you might suffer for Christ’s sake*. Did I see you wince at that word? Well, but if usefulness by labor is an honor, usefulness by suffering is a still greater honor. In heaven, the brightest crown that any saint wears is that which is set with the rubies of martyrdom.

When I have read the stories of those holy men and women who died in Roman amphitheatres, or were burned to death over at Smithfield yonder, I must confess that I have envied them. To preach Christ seems so little compared with having grace enough to suffer for His name’s sake. As one reads of their intense suffering, one naturally shrinks from it and says, “I thank God that I am not called to endure that trial.” But yet, if we were called to it, we should have grace given to us to bear it. What an honor it was for them, for the sake of the Prince of martyrs, the Leader of the sacramental hosts of God’s elect, to be able and willing to give themselves up to death!

Well, you may be called to suffer for Christ’s sake, but at any rate, you are called to this—to lay your all upon His altar, to devote yourself, your substance, all that you are, and all that you have, to His honor and glory. You are apprehended of Christ Jesus for this purpose—try to apprehend it. Oh, brothers, let us resolve to live wholly unto Christ! Let us bid Him take our hands, and feet, and heart, and eye, and brain, and every faculty of our being. May God get as much glory as He can, out of us, or reflect as much of His glory as is possible through even our weakness and infirmities!

But this is why we have been apprehended of Christ Jesus, that we may be wholly and alone the Lord’s, “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died, and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.” Here is the prize of your high calling—are you ready to run for it? God help you to do so, to apprehend, in personal self-sacrifice, all that for which Christ has apprehended you!

But that is not all. Paul said that he regarded himself as having been arrested by Christ *that he might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead*. Oh, when that trumpet peals out and the righteous arise, shall I arise, or shall I lie rotting in the tomb another thousand years? And when He calls His saints together, when—

*“East and west, and south and north,
Speeds each glorious angel forth,
Gathering in with glittering wing
Zion’s saints to Zion’s King;”*

shall we be there? Shall we behold the splendor of Christ’s appearing? Shall we sit upon the throne with Him, judging mankind? Shall we be forever with the Lord?

It is for this that we are apprehended. Are you getting ready for this? Are you preparing, by His grace, for that eternal future? I believe that all the saints will get to heaven, but every saint ought to aspire, not only to get there, but to carry there with him that which will make his heaven more glorious to God than it otherwise would be.

Part of the joy of heaven will be to remember what the Lord did by us. We are not going there to go to bed forever—we are going there to do some glorious work for Christ. How does He describe it? He says that, if His servants have been faithful and diligent, He will say to one, “Have thou authority over ten cities,” and another shall be ruler over five cities. As we have proved our ability, such will be the dominion that Christ shall give us throughout the ages to come. And a little failing today, as it were the loss of a penny, may mean the loss of thousands of pennies in the world to come. You shall be as full as the greatest vessel, but you shall have smaller capacity. Look to that matter now.

I believe that every action in this mortal life thrills through eternity. Time and eternity are like one tremulous mass of jelly—if you touch one particle of it here, it trembles right through, and right throughout the ages. Not a word is spoken but the echo of it shall be heard when time shall be no more.

Not a deed is done that dies, especially the deeds of quickened men and women. They know not what they do—they will be astonished to find, at the last great day—what they have done, for the Lord will evidently surprise His people when He says, “I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink.” They will say, “Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?”

And if you apprehend to the full the great purpose of Christ in apprehending you, though it is not of debt, but of grace—not of works, but of faith, yet, in the ages to come, you shall be surprised to find how the little that you did shall bring you great reward. God gives His people good works and then rewards them for them. He works in us to will and to do, and then we will and do, and He gives us a reward for willing and doing.

I wish, dear friends, that in heaven we might feel, “Well, I did as God helped me. I apprehended that for which my Master apprehended me.” You have no idea what you are going to do in glory. I expect, one day, to preach to an assembled universe concerning my Lord and Master, to tell to principalities and powers what Christ has done—not to sit with a lot of you good people, some listening to me, and some, perhaps, not, but to have angels, and principalities, and powers to be my congregation. And I want to learn to preach well here that they may be attentive to me.

Each one of you who has served your Lord shall be a monument of His love and His mercy, and the angels shall stop and read what is inscribed on you. Oh, that there might be some good letters written on you, that when Gabriel stops to read, he may clap his hands and then fly with swifter flight, as he says, “Bless the Lord for what He did for that poor man, for what He wrought in that poor woman! His grace is conspicuous there.” As you are to be seen throughout all eternity, may you be fit to be seen! May the Lord, of His grace, work in you that which shall be to the praise of His glory!

III. I have done when I just take a minute or two to show THE LESSONS WHICH PAUL IS TEACHING US BY THIS TEXT.

The first is this, *make sure of your apprehension by Christ Jesus*, so that you can talk like Paul about it, “That for which I am apprehended.” Pray the Lord that you may feel His hand on your shoulder, that you may feel His grace in your heart, His blessed fetters on your feet, His divine manacles upon your wrists. Pray that you may have no doubt about it, but may know of a surety that the Lord has arrested you.

This being known, *do not let it make you idle*. Do not say, “Christ has arrested me; I am saved; nothing more is needed.” No. For what has He arrested you? He has a purpose in it. That arrestment was but the beginning of a great lifework. Let it not make you idle, but let it be your encouragement. If Christ has arrested you to be holy, He will make you holy. If Christ has arrested you for usefulness, be confident in seeking it. If Christ has arrested you to make you an eternal monument of His grace, believe that you will be, and press forward to the mark for the prize of your high calling.

Finally, *let this lead you to hope for the salvation of others*. Go forward hopefully in your service for others. Teach that Sunday school class with a firm belief that you were apprehended on purpose that John and Tom might be converted. Go and teach the girls and say, “I was apprehended to bring Mary, and Jane, and Louisa to Christ—and do not be at all doubtful about it.” This is the purpose of God—expect it to be worked out.

Go to your street corner, my beloved brother, and preach away—even when the mob disturbs you. Go from door to door with your tracts, even though they may be cast in your face. Go, city missionaries and Bible-women, to your holy and righteous toil. Go each one of you to the work for which God has apprehended you, for as the Lord has apprehended you, it is for a purpose, and rest not until that purpose is fully subserved.

May the Lord arrest some sinners tonight! Pray, as you go down the aisles, “Lord, arrest them! Bring them to Your dear feet and save them this night, for Jesus’ sake!” Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON**PHILIPPIANS 3**

The Holy Ghost indited this epistle by the pen of His servant Paul. May He also write it on our hearts!

Verse 1. *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*

When you get to “finally,” when you are very near the end of your journey, still, “rejoice in the Lord.” “Finally,” says Paul, as if this was the end of his epistle, the conclusion of all his teaching, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.” But never do it finally, never come to an end of it. Rejoice in the Lord and yet again rejoice, and yet again rejoice—and as long as you live, rejoice in the Lord.

1. *To write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*

Some hearers are like the Athenian academicians—they want continually to hear something new. The apostle says, “To have the same things written to you, is safe.” So is it for you, dear friends, to have the same Gospel, the same Jesus, the same Holy Spirit made known to you, is safe. New doctrine is dangerous doctrine.

2. *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers,—*

They are like dogs. If they fawn upon you, they will bemire you, if they do not bite you.

2-3. *Beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

There were some who had confidence in circumcision, who greatly troubled Paul. The apostle says that they were, “the concision,” the cutters off, of whom he would have the Philippians beware.

4. *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:*

If any man might have had confidence in the flesh, truly Paul might.

5-6. *Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

So that I do not know what more he could have had. If a Jew had tried to select a man who had something to glory in, he could not have picked any man to stand in the front of Paul. He was truly a Jew, he had received the initiatory rite, and on the right day. He was born of the innermost tribe, the tribe of Benjamin, in whose country stood the temple itself. He was a Pharisee who pushed the law to the extreme. He tithed his mint and his cummin. Nobody could have anything to glory in which Paul had not.

7. *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*

So that, when we come to Christ, whatever we have to trust to, we must put away. We must write it on the other side of the ledger. We had entered it as a gain—now we must set it down as a loss—it is of no value whatsoever. It is a loss if it shall tempt us to trust any less in Christ.

8. *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:*

Those are sweet words, “my Lord.” Remember how Thomas cried, in ecstasy, “My Lord and my God.” Paul, by faith putting his finger into the prints of the nails, says, “My Lord.”

8-9. *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,—*

Oh, what a precious place to be found in, “in him,” trusting in Him, hidden away in Him, a member of His body, as it were, losing myself in Him!

9. *Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,—*

He does not say, not trusting it, but not even having it, not counting it, not thinking it worthwhile to put down among his possessions that which he once prized so much.

9-10. *But that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which; is of God by faith: that I may know him,—*

Paul means, “That I may know Him more than I now do,” for he knew Him and delighted in Him, but he felt as if he had not really begun to know Christ. He was like a child at school who has learnt to read and to write, and knows so much that he begins to want to know more.

10-11. *And the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

He knew that all the dead would rise again, but he aspired to the *first* resurrection, “The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.”

12-13. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect but I follow after, if if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:*

He did count himself as saved—he knew that he was Christ’s—but he did not count himself as having realized all that Christ meant to do for him and by him. He did not reckon that he had reached as far as he could reach, or learnt all that he could learn, or done all that he could do.

13-14. *But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which 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.*

You have seen a man running very fast. How he leans forward, as though he would send his heart before him, and go quicker than his legs can carry him! So did the apostle, “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

15-16. *Let us, therefore, as many as are mature, be thus minded: and if in any thing you are otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*

Let us keep all the good that we have received. Let us not give up the truth that we have learnt. Let us not leave the way along which we have traveled so far—and let us keep together—let perfect unanimity prove that the work of grace is going on in one as well as in another.

17. *Brethren, be followers together of me,—*

In these days, certain people find fault with Paul and speak of him as if he were not inspired, and not to be followed as Christ was, But here he expressly says what no man like Paul would ever say unless moved of the Holy Spirit, for he was modest and by no means anxious to push himself forward, “Brethren, be followers together of me.”

17. *And mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

Mark them, but do not follow them. See how they walk, but do not imitate them, “Have us for an ensample.”

18. *(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ:*

I lay a stress upon the article, “They are *the* enemies of the cross of Christ.” Professors of religion who get into the church, and yet lead ungodly lives, are the worst enemies that the cross of Christ has. These are the sort of men who bring tears into the minister’s eyes. These are they who break his heart. They are *the* enemies of the cross of Christ.

19. *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)*

“Who mind earthly things”—even when they profess to be minding spiritual things—pretending to be followers of Christ up to heaven and yet really making a gain of the things of God here below.

20. *For our conversation is in heaven;*

Can you say that, dear friend? Is your citizenship in heaven? Is your conversation there? Do you often commune with your Lord upon the throne? Judge yourselves whether it be so or not. It is a very poor thing to have a name to be in heaven and yet never to have any converse with heaven. I wish that we could all say that we talk more to God than we do to men, and have more business upward than we have here below.

20. *From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

He is coming! He is coming! Are we looking for Him? This is the true position of the Christian, looking for the appearing of his Lord.

21. *Who shall change our vile body,—*

“The body of our humiliation.” We have only part of the redemption while we are here. The soul is regenerated, newly-born, but the body is not. “The body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness.” The redemption of the purchased possession will be perfect at the resurrection. The resurrection will be, to the body, what regeneration is to the soul. We sometimes wonder why we are sick, when Christ could make us well in a moment, but the reason is that, as yet, He has not fully brought His divine power to bear upon the body.

21. *That it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

May He show some part of that blessed power in us tonight! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—852, 694, 803

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