



*the*  
*Golden*  
*Candlestick*

**CHRIST OUR ALL**

**Part 1**

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*Volume 156*

## CHRIST OUR LIFE

*Reading: Acts 16:6-13, 16-19, 23-26; Phil. 1:1-2.*

We are going to meditate for a little while in this letter to the Philippians as to *how the cross makes Christ our all*, for that is what this letter really does bring before us. It is not in the nature of an address to you, but it is in the nature of a conference together, that we share what the Lord shows to us of His desire. What I mean is that not one of us here is in position to stand up and to speak to others out of this letter as from any position attained, for we shall very soon find ourselves in a place where we have to say, brethren, I have not attained! I mean that we must take, right at the outset, the position that the apostle takes in the letter.

When he wrote the letter to the Romans, he set out to present a great argument, a tremendous theological argument. When he wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he set out to answer a lot of questions that had arisen and to give his judgment on some very serious matters. When he wrote the letter to the Galatians, he gave himself up to issuing a tremendous challenge and to answering a challenge which had been issued. When he wrote his letter to the Ephesians, he was pouring out a great revelation which had been growing and growing until it had reached a great measure of fulness. But now, in writing this letter to the Philippians, he is not doing any of those things. He does not say, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ", nor, "I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ"; no official designation is used and no great treatise is in his mind. He simply takes the position of a man, and with Timothy he says, "bondsmen of Christ Jesus", and he is about to open his heart as a man to men, as a Christian to Christians, as a lover of Christ to other lovers of Christ, to share what is in his heart on common ground, on a common level with them.

"Brethren," he will say presently, "I count not myself to have attained, neither am I already perfect, but this one thing I do...". You see, it is the appeal from his own spiritual life and aspiration. His position is just this: "Brethren, this is what I have in view, what I am seeking after, and what I call upon you to join with me in seeking after!" That is the position of this letter, and you and I must come there as we approach it, for here not one of us can give an address. We can only say this letter is beyond us, far beyond

anything to which we have attained! We cannot preach at one another, but here is the Lord's thought, let us talk to one another about it with a view to encouraging one another if it may be that by any means we may also attain. So that is our starting-point. May it be that the Lord leads us on from here to some increased measure of Himself.

The message which comes out of the letter is Christ as our all through the work of His cross, and that arises in several particular connections. Each chapter of the four has a particular connection. We shall just now look at the first which is found in chapter 1 verse 21: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." For me to live is Christ. Then that means Christ is our very life, the very motive of our life, of our being. Asked what life means, the apostle would say, Just Christ! What does life mean to you, Paul? Christ! What is your outlook, Paul? Christ! What are you working for, Paul? Christ! What is your hope? It is Christ! Have you nothing else at all in this world for all your days? No, nothing else; Christ, just Christ, that is all! For me to live, for me to *live* is Christ! If we were put to the test on that in a number of different connections and interests, associations, objects on this earth, we should be weighed in the balances and found wanting. We will not press it, it would be too painful, we should all be ashamed. But again, the aim and aspiration is that it should be so.

See what place Christ has in this chapter: "Bondsmen of Christ Jesus", "Peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ", "Until the day of Jesus Christ", "The tender mercies of Christ Jesus", "The fruits of righteousness... through Christ Jesus", "My bonds... in Christ", "Some preach Christ even of envy and strife", "Christ is proclaimed; and therein I rejoice", "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ", "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death", "For me to live is Christ", "... to depart and be with Christ...", "Your glorying may abound in Christ Jesus", "Worthy of the gospel of Christ", "To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer in his behalf." It is Christ everywhere; Christ is every direction, in every connection, it is all Christ.

### **Christ our life by way of the cross**

Now, we have to see how the cross had brought Paul to the place where Christ was his very life; how it had worked in him to bring him to that place. We have read from the account how this church at Philippi came into being and we picked up the story at the point where Paul and his companions were moving forward prayerfully in the Spirit in their great ministry. They

reached one point and essayed to move on in a certain direction, but they were not permitted by the Holy Spirit to go, and finding that way closed spiritually, they sought to move in another direction. Again the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them, and so they stayed, for the night at least, where they were, and prayed, I suppose; and during that night a vision came to Paul. You notice that *he* saw the vision and *they* came to the conclusion. The man of Macedonia standing and appealing, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us! And they concluded the Lord called them to preach the gospel there and so they went by a straight course into Macedonia, into Europe, for the first time and came to Philippi. That all seems fairly straightforward. They went down on the Sabbath Day by the riverside, supposing they would find a quiet place for prayer. I expect all of them were looking in all directions for the man of Macedonia. You know what they found — a woman, not of Macedonia at all, but from Asia where they had been forbidden to go and preach the Word — Contradiction No.1! And then they found a girl possessed of an evil spirit who bothered, worried, annoyed and vexed; not much hope of things in that direction — Contradiction No.2! And then the immediate issue of Paul's act was that they were thrown into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks — Contradiction No.3! Where *is* this man of Macedonia, where is this open door for preaching the gospel?

I venture to say that you and I would have just sat down and said, This is a terrible case of mistaken guidance; it is a mistake! I was quite sure that the Lord gave me that vision, the Lord was in that matter of our coming this way, but everything now argues to the contrary! Now, seeking to do what I believe to be the Lord's will, this is where I get landed, trying to follow the Spirit's leading, checking up as I go; this is what obedience to the Lord results in! Something like that would go on inside, at any rate; the devil would see to it. The situation, the appearances, the apparent contradictions, on the one hand; and then bleeding sores and a dark dungeon. These are things calculated to raise very serious questions about your divine guidance and being in the will of God. At any rate, they provide good ground for the enemy to encamp upon. Well, I have no doubt it was a very severe test of faith for Paul and Silas, a real test of faith as to their guidance.

How did they survive, how did they get on top of this situation, for undoubtedly they were on top of it. At midnight they prayed and sang hymns. Again I have to pause and say that this letter is beyond us, this whole matter finds us wanting. I think at least a part of the answer to the question of their triumph in such a situation is this, that the cross had done a work deep enough to rule out all personal interests, and they were so thoroughly ruled

out that the Holy Spirit Himself had a clear way to bring up their spirits in triumph in spite of darkness in circumstances, darkness in spiritual appearances. The Holy Spirit was able to do this. You notice what Paul says in this first chapter (and it does seem to me that there is much in this Philippian letter which is an echo of the Philippians' experiences years before), "For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

The "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ"; don't you think that that explains it? We do not want to be too analytical or introspective, but it will not do us any harm just to take account of our own disposition. Is it not true, if we were quite honest with our own hearts that a very large measure of our darkness under trial, our failure, our breakdown, our going to pieces, our loss of position spiritually, is because we are disappointed and our disappointment lies very largely in the direction of something upon which our hearts were set, something of personal interest even in the Lord's work, our ministry, things for the Lord? We would not call it our ambition, perhaps we have never used the word 'ambition', but may there not be an element of that lying behind our vision; something, even though it were for the Lord, which we had hoped would be blessed and prospered, to which the Lord would grant success? Yet the whole thing is brought, like David's enterprise with the Ark on the new cart, to a sudden hold-up and everything seems to go to pieces and we go to pieces, and when the truth is known, we discover that there were really personal interests in it.

In Paul's case the great factor in his triumph in suffering, for he was a triumphant man, his triumph continually in the midst of terrible adversities, trials and difficulties all the way through the years, was his utter disinterestedness. With him there was no personal interest at all. It was Christ. The cross had smitten everything personal, and this letter to the Philippians is full of that. Take this for an example: "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will; the one do it of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel; but the other proclaim Christ of faction, not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for me in my bonds" (vv. 15-17).

How mean, how contemptible, how wicked, to preach Christ in such a way as to afflict one of Christ's servants! What does Paul say? Contemptible wretches! The Lord bring His judgments to bear upon them! Not at all! Oh, what does it matter how they preach Christ? Christ is preached and that is all that matters and therein I rejoice and will rejoice! I tell you, it takes a crucified man to say that, when a man is languishing in prison or lying in prison in bonds and that is going on. They are trying to hit a man when he is

down and using the very gospel or the preaching of the gospel, their manner of preaching the gospel, to that end. This man says, That is all right, I will simply bear all that, and thank the Lord that, however they preach, so long as Christ is Christ, that is all that matters! It is only a crucified man who can say that. It is a man who has no personal feelings or interests.

You know a little later in the letter what he says about all the things that were gain to him. I was this and I was that and I was the other, I had this and I had that, I was in a position! Yes, but these things which were gain to me I counted loss for Christ; yes, and I count all things to be loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him! You see, the cross has dealt with name, reputation, position, advantages, everything that was personal. This man has come to the tremendous vantage point of perfect disinterestedness and selflessness and it is only the working out of the principle that the Holy Spirit follows the way of the cross.

### **The Spirit follows the way of the cross**

That is true always right through the Word. That cross leads the way of the Spirit; the Spirit follows the way of the cross. There is a hymn which says —

*“Enlarge our soul’s capacity, cut deeper channels, Lord;  
Room for the floods of blessing now, according to Thy Word.”*

Cut deeper channels — the cross cutting the way for the Spirit, the supply of the Spirit. Here is the message; here it is, if we said no more. Paul was a man who was crucified to self; the cross had wrought that in him and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus did the rest. Oh, I cannot preach at you! I can only say to you, will not the Holy Spirit spontaneously take the course which the cross has made, opened up? Will not the Spirit of Jesus come in and lift us up even in our sufferings and our sorrows, when we have got rid of that horrible, hateful, obstructive self-interest, self-pity, self-consideration, self-realisation, self-strength? I am sure our hearts must be smitten by this word if it is true. If you and I, and this is the sum of the whole letter, can really come, by the grace of God, to the place where the cross has worked in us so that we are delivered from all self-interest, on its weak side and its strong side, the Spirit of Jesus Christ will make a difference in our case in the time of adversity which will turn the midnight into midday, darkness into light,

and make us sing in a dungeon. At least it is worth thinking about. In Paul's case, the cross had resolved everything into a matter of Christ.

Perhaps some of you have gone beyond me, and even yet there lurks in your mind this thought: Yes, but those who are most utter for the Lord, out and out, thoroughgoing for the Lord, are the ones who have very often the greatest reason to wonder whether the Lord is for them, and yet when that arises (I must press this again) there is tremendous deliverance from the sting of that sort of thing when you know, and the Lord knows, that you have no other concern but for His glory. I think the sting of discouragement, disappointment, despair, of doubt, very often is found just in that tail of some self-interest which means disappointment — personal disappointment — not only disappointment for the Lord. Well, what I see here in Paul's case is that, with the destruction of these self-elements, he came to a position which was a very strong one. This position — “For me to live is Christ” — in his case was a very strong position in the hour of deepest difficulty and trial. “I know that this shall turn to my salvation.” “Now I would have you know that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel.” That is a strong position.

### **A strong position**

What is the strength of it? It is this, that the sovereignty of God is behind it. If we come to the place where the Lord Himself knows that “For me to live is Christ” is true and not just something said by us, then I believe it is a position which has the sovereignty of God behind it. See them at Philippi again, for that is where they were; they were there for the Lord and only the Lord, without interests but His own. Well, the situation which arose was a very difficult one, a very perplexing one, apparently full of contradictions, but look at the sovereignty of God behind it. How strategic it was, to begin with, being an open door into Europe. What an assembly came into being!

“I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now.” What an assembly, and what a sovereign act to make the first members of that assembly the very jailer and his family! Where Lydia came in I do not know. She was evidently a commercial traveller, meaning great possibilities for the gospel as she links up Asia and Europe. You will find her assembly in the beginning of the book of the Revelation. It is all very strategic and wonderful and God is behind this whole thing and yet what complications! If you

sit down with the thing at the outset and take in the situation which immediately arises, you say, Well, this is a mess; this is a mistake; you have made a blunder this time! You would give it all up and lose your confidence in God. Satan knew better than that, yet these men who had no personal interests did not go down under that state of despair. They proved the sovereignty of God; and Paul in another prison, years afterwards in Rome, wrote this letter and touched on the same thing — the sovereignty of God in a crucified life. “I would have you know that the things which have happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel.” “I know that this shall turn unto my salvation.” The sovereignty of God. It is a strong position. We cannot be sure of sovereignty unless we are well crucified. If there is any sovereignty of ‘I’ or self, the sovereignty of God is set aside.

### **An emancipated position**

And then it was a very emancipated position. How unfettered Paul was by human judgments. It did not matter a scrap to him what people thought or said or did. He is a free man all the time whether he is in prison or out. Why? If you and I *know* that we are not out for some *thing* here, that really our hearts are only for the Lord, it is a wonderfully emancipated position to be in. Let these men preach in a manner in which they mean to bring harm to us, preach against us and even use the gospel as an instrument against us. What does it matter? We are emancipated, we are on top of that, and all are emancipated who are delivered from self. If we know that there is no question about our utterness for the Lord, we are not worried very much about things said and things done.

### **A joyous position**

And I see, too, what a joyous position it was; I *see* it. I am not telling you that I have *got* it, but I see it. Someone has said that the letter to the Philippians can be summed up in a very brief sentence by Paul. It is this: I rejoice! — you rejoice! And that is the letter — I rejoice, you rejoice. For it is full of joy right through; joy in the Lord. And what is the secret of joy? If you ask what the secret of misery is I can tell you very quickly — to be occupied with yourself. The secret of joy is to be occupied with the Lord.

May the Lord lead us into Paul’s secret: by means of the cross, the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

## CHRIST OUR MIND

*Reading: Phil. 2:2, 5-9, 20, 21.*

We were seeing in our previous meditation that the message of this letter as a whole is Christ our all through the work of the cross. In chapter 1 the note is Christ our Life. “For to me to live is Christ” (v. 21). We saw how the cross had worked in Paul to bring him to the place where Christ was his life.

Now, in chapter 2, the note is the cross making Christ’s mind ours — Christ our mind. Just look over in chapter 4:2: “I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord.”

### **The street of gold**

When we reach the end of God’s work in this dispensation and see that work concretely presented in its consummate form, symbolised by the city, the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, the specific features of which are described or mentioned, one of those features is that it has one single highway, a street. That street, that highway, that thoroughfare of the New Jerusalem is said to be of pure gold. God will not begin to make His city at the end of the dispensation. God is making it *now* and every part of it is now in process of constitution and not least the street of gold. When we take up our New Testament and begin to read the apostolic letters of Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, we are already in the city, or the city is already present, for the city is the church. We can see the street running through all these letters as the church is in view; or God making His thoroughfare, preparing His gold.

But the city is being prepared, constituted and built amidst much adversity; just as much, and I think a very great deal more than Nehemiah had to contend with in building the earthly city or its wall.

To come straight to the point, this street, this thoroughfare of pure gold where all the saints meet (if there is only one street, then that is the only place, for people will not have outside streets and back ways out of touch with one another), they will be there together in one place, in one way. This golden thoroughfare is none other than the drawing together of the love of

God. Really, what we have among the many other things in these letters, is how the cross secures that love which constitutes the oneness, the fellowship, of the saints, for the cross is so closely associated with the love of God. We know that quite well and we know that His love to be truly in our hearts is the result of a deep work of the cross. In a very clear, precise way, the letter to the Philippians brings that into view, but just for a moment — for we have seen how these letters lead on and on, stage by stage, step by step, to final fulness, and how each one takes up what has gone before to carry it on to something greater — just for a moment we look back over them.

The letter to the Romans is a great, great letter on the love of God. We need not stay to argue that, but in the Roman letter we also have everything presented in a full and comprehensive way. It is all gathered there and presented, our salvation in its fulness, its completeness, from every angle, all gathered into that letter. But when you pass the letter to the Romans, then you begin to take things up, shall we say, piecemeal, the thing has to be dealt with in parts, so that the next letter, 1 Corinthians, from this present standpoint of our immediate consideration, is very significant. You remember how, at the beginning of the letter, the apostle deplored the slowness of growth, the poorness of spiritual life, the meagreness there, having to speak to babes not to men, and then he put his finger upon the cause, spoke of divisions among them. One says, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos; another, I am of Peter; and yet another, I am of Christ; all of which positions were repudiated and rebuked by the apostle. There was a making of four thoroughfares where God only intended that there should be one. And I suppose the people who said, “I am of Christ”, thought that their thoroughfare was the best of them all and probably it was the worst, because it was making Christ an instrument of doing the very thing that He had come to try and make impossible; to bring about something that was furthest from the thought of God, the oneness of His people in one body. All this was a terrible contradiction of love. It was a contradiction of the nature of the one street of the city. So we are not surprised that, as the apostle gets near to the end of that letter, he by inference says, Your gifts may divide you and be the occasion for one setting himself off against another. Hence all these gifts may miss their objective which is for the building up of the whole body and therefore, although gifts may be right, in order for the gifts to reach their end, there must be the one all-governing thing. “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.” So he covers the ground of gifts and says that in order that they may reach this end of building the body, oneness, love is the way, love

is the street, love is the thoroughfare.

We might pause there, because what we want to see at the outset is how Satan continuously fights this very thing because of the tremendous issue, the end of love. What we are going to see, or what we may see at once without any waiting is that Philippians 2 brings immediately the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to the highest place of authority, power, dominion in every realm. That is what this chapter brings into view. The Name which is above every name, in which every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess to the glory of God the Father — that is the end. It is the city being the vessel of the glory of God, having the glory of God by the testimony of Jesus.

### **Oneness in love**

Now, says the apostle, in order to reach that, that throne, that highest of all places, the way is — “Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus.” What is this mind? Well, “Be of the same mind one towards another”; “I beseech you to be of the same mind.” It is oneness in love. “I have no man likeminded who will earnestly be concerned for your affairs; they all seek their own, not the things which are Christ’s.” You see that this mind of Christ is a oneness of mind which has no self in it — that is chapter 2. “He emptied Himself.” There was a great deal of self at Corinth. Satan continuously fights against the building of the city and especially against the preparing of this highway of love. Sometimes it would seem the objective of the devil is the destruction of the love of God’s people one for another because of the great end in view through that love. Love builds up. What do these things mean — I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Peter, and I am of Christ? Do you not think that it is very probable that those who said, I am of Paul, really were taken up with a line of teaching? That is Paul’s teaching, Paul’s interpretation, Paul’s vision, conception, Paul’s wonderful comprehension of spiritual things as such! It was something peculiar to Paul’s ministry that attracted them and they made it the thing upon which they fastened. Apollos — well, we have come to think of Apollos as being a man of eloquence and burning zeal. According to the word in Acts he was a learned man, he knew the Scriptures, he was full of zeal and probably very earnest, but it was again something peculiar to a man and his ministry.

What shall we say of Peter? We do not want to say anything that would be a misunderstanding of Peter, but it may have been that Peter, being the apostle to the Jews, appealed more to those who had a Judaistic outlook and rather relieved the tremendous strain which Paul’s heavenly position put

upon them. Whatever it was, you see it was a man's line of things given him by God, but it was something of ministry which appealed to them.

What shall we say of the fourth group, I am of Christ?! It may just have been this — I do not belong to your denomination, I do not belong to your sect, I do not belong to any denomination at all, I am above and outside; and I am making undenominationalism a denomination and standing apart, and I am schismatic. That is why I said this was perhaps the worst of all. We have got to be very honest and faithful in facing things like that. These are the things that have been going on all through the centuries, the people of God broken up by teachings, ministries, persons, and then false conceptions of what a heavenly position is, perhaps as represented by the Christ party; false conceptions of a heavenly position. Oh, if the Lord will enable us to say this word and to receive it, it may make a lot of difference and give a way, as we were saying in chapter one, for the Holy Spirit, a way for the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The cross has got to do something in this matter.

### **The work of the cross**

First of all, you and I have got to allow the cross to smite and to slay everything represented by the first three groups, that is, teachings, interpretations, specific lines of truth, of ministries and persons in ministry, so that in no way are we attached to these things as things, but rather in a true and right and spiritual way it is Christ who is our focal point, our meeting point, our basis — Christ Himself. We may have Paul, Apollos and Peter and not grow one whit spiritually, like the Corinthians. We may have all that they have to give us and still remain stunted because it is an 'it', a something, a line, a teaching, an interpretation, a ministry. We think, of course, it is the Lord. Are we quite sure? It is a matter about which we have to be made very sure, that it really is the Lord. And then the cross must deal with that which is represented by the fourth thing — I am of Christ! I will be very practical and come right to the point. It is a false apprehension of a heavenly position for anybody to run down Christians because they are in denominations and to have anything in them which separates them from children of God because they are in these things. It is a false apprehension of a heavenly and spiritual position. I want to say that with great emphasis. Such people have not yet come to the place where they can discriminate between children of God and things in which children of God may be. You and I might come to the place where more or less we could not participate in the things and might see that the things — call them what you like, sects, denominations,

such things, — that those things are limiting things, that they are a contradiction to the thought of God. We may come to see that there is all the difference between a very strong feeling and conviction about that and allowing our feeling towards the thing to touch the people who are children of God, and you have got to keep a very wide gap between those two things. When you meet someone who is in something which you feel the Lord has delivered you from or led you out of or shown to you to be not in accord with His mind, you must not allow your feeling towards that thing to touch that child of God. Our attitude towards a child of God is to be the love of God for His children as His children wherever they are, and there are children of God in some extraordinary places, real children of God in things which are unthinkable to us. There was a time that I would not believe that it is possible to be a real born-again child of God, know the Lord and walk with the Lord, in the Roman Catholic church. I do believe it now, but do not think I am going to adopt the Roman Catholic church and become a part of it because there are children of God in it. Not at all! I can retain what I feel about that thing and love those children of God as God's children and keep the gap. And there may be, I do not know, worse things than that or things just as difficult to understand, but be careful. The point is that you and I have got to recognise children of God wherever they are, in whatever they are, and keep the street intact, one street, one thoroughfare. We walk with children of God as they walk with the Lord, because they are children of God, and Satan's business is to try and make that impossible, to split up this street into a thousand highways and byways and cul-de-sacs and what not. It is true; he is fighting against this all the time and there is nothing too sacred for him. Oh, the tragic, painful, grievous story of the church is just that — the story of Satan's mischief in dividing the Lord's people.

Well, Corinthians is basic to this matter. I would like to leave what I have said just now and say no more. If the Lord would just take hold of that and deal with us on this matter! It does seem to me that if we violate this, it is as though we draw something across the thoroughfare and close the way to our own progress and to our own testimony. If we cut short God's way, our way is cut short. Well, Satan fought it at Corinth in this way and you see how Paul answered.

He fought it in another way at Galatia, but it was the same thing. These Galatian believers had shown marvellous love, the love of Christ, at their conversion, love towards the Lord's servant who was used as their spiritual father. Paul said, You would have plucked out your very eyes and given them to me! Then along came the Judaisers and with their pernicious work

they gave themselves over to the devil to do this very thing and that beautiful love which showed itself so wonderfully at the beginning just passed out. These Galatians turned against the very man whom God had used to bring everything into their lives. Read it again in the light of Satan's work against the love of God and see what Satan was after. Ye did run well, who has cast the witch's spell over you? Having begun in the Spirit, do you think you are going to be consummated in the flesh? What is the devil after? Simply the arresting and turning back of these people in the way to God's full purpose, and how did he do it? Well you may say — by Judaisers, false teachers, false brethren! Yes, but mainly by interrupting the love between them and the one whom God had appointed and chosen to lead them on to His full thought.

And so you go on. We dare not pass through all the Epistles again. You notice Galatians leads on to Ephesians; Ephesians takes up Corinthians and Galatians with this matter. How wonderful is Ephesians on love. When you get to the end of Ephesians, the great revelation, the love between Christ and His church, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it", you know it is not long before you find yourself in the battle in the heavenlies. When you look very closely, you will find that it is love that is very largely the objective of Satan. Look at the letter itself, and then go over the first chapters of the book of the Revelation. To Ephesus — "I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love." Satan has won. That was Ephesus.

You pass into Philippians and it is just placed here on the way and yet in between. It looks back and it looks on. It looks back to Corinth. How much there is in this letter to the Philippians that savours of what we have in Corinthians, although of course it is very much more beautiful here. Things are on a very much more advanced level, and yet, you see, you get something coming down the way. It is a dim reflection of what was at Corinth. What is all this about? Be of the same mind, be of one mind, one love, one heart, one soul! All seek their own, not the things that are Christ's! It is a Corinthian peril again at Philippi, and the need still is that the cross should keep all that ground out which is contrary to love, the love of Christ holding the saints together unto the full end. There is a real backward look in this Philippian letter, as you will see if you only look at it.

And there is the onward look. After this we shall come to Colossians in this divine ordering of the arrangement of the letters and there we shall find ourselves in the presence of Christ all and in all for the church. That is, the church now coming into the fulness of Christ, but with what does Philippians anticipate us? Oh, Satan's way of preventing the whole corporate expres-

sion of love by individual differences. That is what you have in Philippians. It seems that the trouble, what trouble there was, at Philippi, was individual differences. Here are Euodia and Syntyche, two sisters in Christ who had a difference; and then this repeated exhortation to be of one mind. It is a very wonderful thing that the apostle knew all about individual things at Philippi, just the state of things between individual believers. He knew all about it, but there it was, and these individual differences were Satan's blow at the great corporate oneness in the fulness of Christ.

My point is this, beloved, that it is no use our talking about the church, the body, the city, in these comprehensive terms and figures, and their wonderful representation and all that they mean — to say, “We are in the body of Christ and the body is called to this and the church is called to that”, and be taken up with the great idea which makes its appeal to us and fascinates us, gets us out on the line of the teaching of the body and so on — if there are two in a local assembly who are not of one mind. It can all be nullified by two people. And the message of Philippians — just sandwiched between Ephesians and Colossians — think of that! I always thought that was a point where the arrangement broke down until I saw Colossians and Ephesians — they ought to be right next to each other, Colossians first and Ephesians next. Maybe that is how they were written, but the Holy Spirit is quite right in the arrangement. Ephesians, the body comprehensively presented with its great eternal call and destiny; Colossians, the church in relation to the Head in whom the fulness dwells; and sandwiched in-between a little letter like this which says, Yes, those are great conceptions, immense divine ideas and intentions, but do not forget it all hangs upon one keystone and the keystone is two of you — Euodia and Syntyche. Very practical! I said in our previous meditation, this letter finds us out and none of us can stand up to it. I am not preaching at you; we are talking to one another.

All that we think, that we stand for, all that we speak of, all our vision, all the great language, phraseology, the church, the body, the city, the eternal purpose, the calling and the destiny, all these just come to be focussed upon something between persons. “Be of the same mind.” You see, when the city comes, it will be inconceivable for two people to be somewhere up in a corner, in a side road, having a difference. We have all got to move together on one thoroughfare, and the nature of that thoroughfare is pure gold, perfect love, and that is what God is working at and that is what Satan is working against. How very elementary we are, how at the beginning of things! But are we really, because Philippians is well on and it just says to us that perhaps it will be more difficult to show this mutual love and be of this

oneness of mind at the end. Perhaps it will get more difficult as we go on. Perhaps Satan will have a great deal more to use and to play with and will use it well. Perhaps the battle will become far more intense. Yes, I have no doubt but that Satan will persist in increasing force in his endeavour to divide and scatter the people of God.

A great responsibility is thrown upon us by this very simple word. The whole testimony of Jesus comes back again for a moment to a matter between persons. What this letter says to us in this part particularly is this: children of God are children of God; things are things. And wherever there is a child of God, in whatever there is a child of God, it is a child of God nevertheless, of the Father's family, a brother, a sister, of yours and mine, and we must not be evilly effected towards anyone because of any of the many reasons why they are where they are. They may not have seen what you have seen, they may not have had the advantage of the teaching that you have had. Oh, countless may be the reasons why they are where they are, but if they love the Lord it is not for you or me to judge them. Oh, see how Paul takes this line all the time with those who did things which others thought to be utterly wrong. Paul said, Don't you judge, judge nothing before the time! Everyone, you and they, has got to answer to the Lord, to have a clear conscience before God, and if they are children of God, though there may be many things you think are utterly wrong, you may not approve of, you may disagree with and feel badly about, they are still children of God. While you may feel in your conscience that you must not touch what they touch, do what they do, there is something to be retained in spiritual relationship which, if it were given up and abandoned, would cut the very vitals of spiritual helpfulness. Some of us may feel very strongly about the fundamentals of the faith, but a fundamentalism that is purely a matter of doctrine can mean the loss of a great deal to the Lord. Many a man who would not be called a fundamentalist by a long way, but who by his very upbringing and training is a modernist, has been won by the love shown him by others. Many who have gone away into that sort of thing have at the end come back by love being shown, and love can do a great deal more than argument.

Now, we are not going to compromise with evil and we are not going to say wrong things are less wrong, but let us always keep that gap between a true child of God and the thing. Let us show love to *all* the saints; there is so much hanging upon it. It is, perhaps, a word more to me than to you. I am sure if the cross will do this work in us, it will be cutting a channel for the Spirit; He will have a freer way. I am quite sure the Holy Spirit is locked up and hindered where there is anything that is contrary to the love of God.

## CHRIST OUR GOAL AND PRIZE

*Reading: Philippians 3-4:1*

In our meditation in the letter to the Philippians we found that the main message is the cross and Christ our all. In chapter 2 we especially noticed that aspect of Christ which presents Him as the mind of the children of God — Christ our mind. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”. That mind of Christ in the children of God is particularly related to the matter of fellowship. “Be of the same mind” is a constantly recurring exhortation, and unto that oneness of mind and unto that fellowship, seen in that love between the children of God, the cross has to empty us of other-mindedness to make room for Christ-mindedness.

We are going to consider this a little further as it really leads us on into Philippians 3. We ought not to cut these matters up too finely and divide them too severely because they all run into one another. What there is in chapter 3 is simply the outflow of what is in chapter 2. In chapter 3 we come upon the third aspect of what Christ is as our all, and that is Christ as our goal and our prize. “I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling (or heavenly or on-high calling) “of God in Christ Jesus (verse 14). “That I may gain Christ” (verse 8). Christ our goal and Christ our prize.

### **Christ-mindedness**

In connection with what we were saying in our last meditation about fellowship as a very real thing in relation to reaching the end, this letter seems to present one of the most difficult things in the way of spiritual fullness, that is, how to be set on God’s full thought and at the same time keep an open heart to all God’s people, to avoid anything in the nature of schism or exclusiveness. As things are now, that is one of the most difficult problems in the experience of God’s people. We have noted these repeated exhortations to oneness of mind; “Be of the same mind.” The fact is that there are very few of God’s people who are of one mind, of the same mind, who find it possible to be of one mind. Or, to put that in another way, there are a great many who feel and rightly feel, that it would be wrong for them to accept someone else’s mind.

The explanation for the difficulty is really not far to seek, for I am quite sure that the apostle in what he said here or anywhere else on this matter, never intended that we should try to find some ground upon which we let go our mind for someone else's. You are minded for the whole thought of God, and there are plenty who are not. How are you going to be of the same mind? You are minded in the direction of what the Lord has made very clear to you to be His thought; there are others who have not that mind at all. How are you going to be of the same mind? Well, on all sorts of things we are far from being of one mind, and it would be a terrible business for us to come together to try and find by compromise a basis for being of one mind on these matters. Does that mean that we are violating this command or this exhortation? Does it mean that we somehow have to get to oneness of mind on these things, dealing with them as things? I do not think it does. Probably the enemy would like very much to get us taken up with that sort of thing.

Well then, what does it mean? What did the apostle mean when he urged this — Be of one mind, be of the same mind! He did not, we can conclude, mean a general agreement on all matters, but what he did mean was this: Have a Christ-mindedness! Let the mind of Christ be your mind. You will find that that gets you over a lot of the other difficulties, so that, however different you may be in your conviction, conception, outlook, these things need not divide you or bring in schism.

What is this Christ-mindedness? As we have said before, from the example of Christ set forth in chapter 2, it is an utter absence of self-interest. He existed in God-form, but He did not count it something to be snatched at as His right, to be grasped as His, to be on equality with God. It was His, His by right, by every right, but in the interests of others who were desperately in need, direly in need, perishing, He let go His own personal rights and emptied Himself, came down to deep humility and humiliation. Letting go His own position, letting go His own rights, He emptied Himself. For the sake of others, He humbled Himself. Here we have a clue as to how we can be zealous for God's full thought and may have a very definite mind as to God's thought and will and yet stay in a place of fellowship with others who are not so disposed. Not that we are going to let go our conviction, but our earnest, loving, devoted solicitude for the good and interests of others is going to solve this whole problem. You see, if we take a position and we hold that position to ourselves by saying, "I believe this; this is my conviction; nothing will move me from what I believe to be right and the truth and I stand my ground against all comers, it does not matter what you think or feel, this is where I stand!" — then you break up everything.

But note how the apostle deals with this thing, his own answer to the situation. He dealt with this whole matter of fellowship with God's full thought in view along the line of mutuality, appeal, entreaty: "If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (2:1-2).

As you see from chapter 3, there was no man more positively and utterly set upon God's full end than was Paul. Here he is; he has seen what God has in view, that for which he has been apprehended by Christ. He sees the full thought of God and the full purpose of God and he is simply consumed with devotion to that; everything has been handed up for that. There is no weakness as to his relationship to God's full thought. How is he going to meet this matter of people who may not be as he is in the same measure? Is he going to divide them all up by his manner, by his attitude? Is he going to sift them out and say, Oh well, I know that the majority of you are not concerned about the full thought of the Lord, but some of you are! Those of you who are, come along with me and we will go on together and leave the others to go their own way! Nothing like that at all. His appeal to all is, "If there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation of love, any fellowship ...". That is only saying this in other words — "Dear friends, if you have any of the Lord Jesus at all, may I appeal to what is of the Lord Jesus in you that you will seek to fulfil my joy, make my joy full!" If there is anything of Christ in you at all, you make my joy full! It is the appeal of love instead of the clash of minds. He is saying, Now then, we are all in the Lord Jesus and we all have a measure of the Lord Jesus, let us come on to that ground of what is of Christ and we will all be of one mind to go on together to God's full thought, ruling out every self-interest, every personal concern, and making the one basis of our mutual going on Christ, Christ-interest, Christ Himself becoming our very motive for going on together.

You can hold a position, a view, which can be divisive, and which, by the way in which you hold it and seek to impose it upon others, can rather divide, alienate, isolate, and resolve the situation into something close, exclusive, narrow, small and peevish. That will be because you are devoted to an 'it' and not to the Lord Jesus, for it is impossible for us to be really devoted to the Lord Jesus and to do despite to the Spirit of the Lord Jesus in any child of God. The one way in which we are left to prove our love for the Lord is along the line of our love for His own. John says quite emphatically, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar" (1 John 4:20).

That is an utterly false position. The negative side is no personal interests or feelings, but those of Christ. The positive side is the interests of others. This comes up in this letter more than once — the things of others: “... not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others” (Phil. 2:4). “I have no man likeminded, who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ” (2:20-21).

The positive side is concern for the things of others, and this solicitude is so richly expressed through this letter.

You notice what he says about Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus was taken ill, sick nigh unto death, and in his sickness he got to know that the Philippian saints had heard of his sickness. It was a terrible distress that they should know and be concerned about him and as soon as he could possibly get about he made it his business to relieve them of all anxiety. What solicitude! Here is a man who is not lying down and nursing his own sickness, but thinking of the effect of his sickness upon others. He will get better and get back to them as soon as he can to relieve their anxiety.

### **The heavenly calling**

What I want to say is not just a lot of simple, nice things like that, although they are good. But what is in view here is the goal and the prize. We have seen “God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow.” God has highly exalted Him. Now the letter goes on about the on-high calling of God in Christ, the goal and the prize. We can at once strip this whole thing of the idea that Paul is talking about salvation. Paul was never anxious about his salvation, was never in doubt about his salvation, and Paul never considered it necessary to strive and to press right on to the end in order to get saved. It is not salvation that is here in view. It is the on-high calling, that for which he had been apprehended. He was not only apprehended to be a saved man. Paul had a great influence, I believe, in the writing of the letter to the Hebrews, and there is a little clause there which seems to me to be so much in keeping with this third chapter of Philippians — “We are made partakers with Christ” (Heb. 3:14, AV). You know that the context is: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet ... We see ... Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour” (Heb. 2:6-9).

That is the meaning of Hebrews 3:14: “We are made partakers with Christ *if ...*”. If, if. The prize in view is partnership with Christ in His throne, exaltation, in His heavenly authority. There is little doubt about that. Then towards that end which is the fulness of the on-high calling unto which we have been apprehended by Christ Jesus, mutuality is essential. It is a divine law that we cannot come to that as individuals, just as units. We can only come to that in a *related* way. It is a related body, interrelated, interdependent in all its parts, which has to come to the place where Christ as its Head exercises that supreme authority through His body in a governmental way in this universe. That is the on-high calling, and the body is being prepared for that on a corporate basis, not on an individualistic basis, and therefore mutuality is a law, an indispensable basis, of coming to spiritual fulness, of reaching the end which God has set.

### **A spiritual company in fellowship**

You remember how this law is written in the Old Testament where this very truth is set forth so fully in the monarchy. We know that David represented God’s full thought in type as to Kingship. After David had experienced a period of rejection, though anointed during the reign of Saul, the day came when, Saul having been slain, the leaders came to David and said, You are bone of our bone; it was you who in the days of Saul led us out and led us in and were a shepherd to us! And they made David king in Hebron, and they had a great feast. When they made David king, they feasted for days on end and David reigned in Hebron for seven years before he went out to be made king at Jerusalem for the third time. Note that David was anointed king as a lad. That first anointing was followed by a long period of rejection, although anointed. Then he was made king the second time at Hebron in the midst of a company which had been, during the time of rejection, gathered out, proven and known. They came to him and it was a great time of feasting with this proven, tried company and seven years of that kind of kingship in Hebron. But then the final stage is Jerusalem, David as king in Jerusalem, not only for Judah but over all Israel.

Hebron means a league or fellowship, and it seems to me that in the letter to the Philippians we are at Hebron. There was a time when the Lord Jesus became official King. As anointed, He was our King, but it has been a kind of individual thing, and the Lord has been testing and trying and there comes a day when we have to recognise that this is not just something in the matter of the personal kingship of the Lord Jesus, but that the Lord Jesus has

got to be King in the fellowship way, in the corporate way. In other words, when a tried and proven company is to be brought into being, made concrete, to emerge into something which is crystallised — a spiritual company in fellowship — that is another stage upward toward the throne. The Lord has a period of that during which, while we have had all those personal trials and difficulties of our individual relationship to the Lord Jesus, we come into the place where up higher, nearer the throne, our testings are going to be corporate because there is so much more wealth in the corporate than in the individual. And with Philippians the throne comes very much into view, the on-high calling; and as that comes into view, that is the end for which we are called in Christ. Then the whole matter of mutuality, of fellowship, becomes a much more acute matter than it has ever been before.

There is something of much greater meaning to the Lord and to us when we come to see the fellowship of the Lord's people in relation to that end to which God has called — the throne. We find new trials, new testings in fellowship matters and in corporate life. They are even more acute than our individual trials in relation to the Lord personally. A whole new set of difficulties arises when the fellowship life comes into view. It is very much more difficult to live a Christian fellowship life than it is to live an individual Christian life. That fact is proved by history. If all the Lord's people through these past centuries had only lived as individual Christians, never having for a moment to think of any other Christians, to associate with any other Christians, to live related to other Christians, they would have their trials and their difficulties as Christians in this world. They would have met their difficulties mainly from the world itself, but immediately we come together in fellowships, in assemblies, and corporate life comes in, not only do we meet the common difficulties of the Christian life in the world, but we meet a great many more difficulties among the Lord's people and we find we have come into a new realm of real difficulty. Perhaps you say that is a terrible thing to say. No, not at all. It is more difficult for us to live with other Christians than to live an independent Christian life. That is a fact.

### **The enemy set against fellowship**

Why is it a fact? For this reason, that in relation to fellowship life, there is an immensely greater value for the Lord. This fellowship life brings the ultimate goal of absolute supremacy over all the power of evil much nearer, and therefore Satan makes fellowship life more of a target even than individual life and makes it very much more difficult, so that our greatest

spiritual victories will not be as to our own personal Christian lives but in the realm of our spiritual relationships with the Lord's people. Our difficulties will lie there. Satan is behind this.

The nearer we get to the consummation, the more two things will, or should, normally mark our experience. One, love of the brethren, the sense of the need of one another, how indispensable fellowship is, the values of spiritual relatedness; and alongside of that the intensifying antagonism of the devil to all fellowship, relatedness and communion of saints here. And the fact that these two things run along side by side is proof that there is something big involved. Here in chapter 3 is the on-high calling. It is unto that that chapter 2 states — Be of one mind, be of the same mind! What is that one-mindedness? Why, that you are all bent upon Christ more than upon your own ideas, convictions or personal position, whatever that may be. You are bent upon Christ and you prove it, not by your independent attitude or independent mind or independent judgment, by taking a position in isolation for what you believe, but by your solicitude for all saints. Like Epaphroditus, you put your own life in jeopardy for the sake of others. That is oneness of mind. It is not just agreeing on everything, but it is having one mind and that set upon Christ. I believe that that would solve a great many of our difficulties and differences if it were like that, if we were deeply concerned for the spiritual life of one another, so much so that we would not be occupied with any personal position at all as a personal thing, but, whatever may be true of our devotion to God's full thought, it would be equally true that we are devoted to the Lord's people that they may come to that full thought. Well, this fellowship matter is a tremendous thing in the light of the throne.

### **Living on heavenly ground**

This mindedness is touched upon in another way. The apostle speaks of the Judaisers, cropping up everywhere, the enemies of Christ, of love, of oneness, of fellowship. One thing he says about them is that they mind earthly things. Over against that, the apostle says, "But my life abides in heaven from whence I look for a Saviour" (Phil. 3:20, Conybeare). In our Revised Version, we have "Our citizenship is in heaven", not quite an accurate translation of the original word. Really the word means 'the tenor of life', 'my way of life'. (See Phil. 1:27). It does not mean, our citizenship, our commonwealth. It means: our way of life. Our way of life is in heaven, and the word here 'is in heaven' is stronger in the original. Conybeare translates it — "abides in heaven". What Paul is really saying is this: "Those people

mind earthly things, but I am staying up in heaven in my way of life!" My interests and way of life, the tenor of my life, is up there and it stays up there!

That is another clue to this whole situation. If you and I get down onto earthly things, we will very soon be caught by the concision. That is one of the titles by which Paul calls these Judaisers. He calls them dogs because of uncleanness within while washing things without. And then he calls them the evil workers because of the work they were doing. Then he calls them the concision. "We are the circumcision." He means they have taken hold of circumcision as a rite and made it an earthly instrument as a mark of a sect. He says, "that they may glory in your flesh"; they put a brand on you that you belong to that sect, and you are sectarian at once. You are a body in yourself; you belong to a certain company as apart from all others. This is a false meaning of circumcision, which is something of the heart altogether and earthly things are ruled out in the death of Christ. Concision is the dividing of the Lord's people: schism, divisiveness. This comes about by getting down onto earthly things, and we know quite well that immediately we get onto earthly things, we will find ourselves divided up. Touch things from the national standpoint and you are divided. Touch things from denominational standpoint and you are divided. Anything on the earth divides at once, no matter what it is, and you cannot possibly be of one mind if you are on an earthly basis of things. You never stay of one mind very long if you are touching earthly things, peoples and things down here. Paul says, Stay in heaven! My life abides in heaven! You have got to get above the earthly in order to have oneness of mind.

I want to re-emphasize in this connection that you and I cannot possibly know this mutuality and mutual building up, this fellowship, this Hebron life if we are going to come down onto the earthly things, to take account of what we are here, even religiously, on this earth. We have to close our eyes to these things where the Lord's people are concerned. It does not matter a little bit to me what you are here on this earth, what denomination you belong to. You can belong to all the denominations at once, if you like. It does not matter. That is nothing to me, that is no business of mine. The thing that is my business is, Are you a child of God? If you are then you and I have something in common; we have one common life. You have exactly the same life in your spirit as I have in mine, and it is not divided, for it is one; it remains intact, a whole. The Holy Spirit cannot be broken up into fragments; He is one Spirit. "There is one Spirit." Then I simply meet you on the ground of our common life. I do not want you to tell me what you belong to

here on this earth. If we get onto that, we shall find we are beginning to separate a little, get broken up. Let us shut our eyes to all that and take account of the Lord's people as the Lord's people and as sharing a common life, and let us get on with our heavenly business. If they will put in their earthly side of things — all right, we cannot help it, it is their lookout, they have to answer to the Lord for that, but we still regard them as the Lord's children, still seek to show them the love of Christ, still seek to be solicitous for their well-being. Their responsibility comes in when they shut the door to us. It is not for us to shut the door to them. I want to emphasise that that is the only hope of spiritual growth. If you come down onto earthly things, you will in some way or other become the concision. You will be taking the heavenly thing to use for an earthly purpose. That is concision — 'with-cision' — a means of cutting off. We have got to stay up above. Let us remember that if you and I believe in the body of Christ, the church which is His body, it is quite impossible for us to hold the truth of the oneness of the body of Christ and come on to earthly ground. The only possible way of really consistently believing in the oneness of the body of Christ is to get on to heavenly ground, off this earth altogether, to forsake what is here and see it from the heavenly standpoint, that it is essentially spiritual.

Many practical problems arise. At the same time, it does not upset the final argument that, for the people of God to come to fulness, we have to get onto heavenly ground and forsake the earthly, because the earthly is always the ground of division. Love for all saints and solicitude for them, and even then our solicitude should not be the solicitude of those who think they have something more than anyone else. Oh no, it is just love. There is no conceit in love. There is no self-vaunting in love. There is nothing about true love that puts us in a superior position. That is not love. True love will be that we are in as much need as anyone else and we are getting down alongside to be as much help as we can and to get as much — it is going to be mutual. Oh, that beautiful picture of Hebron where the leaders of Judah came to David and those wonderful words — "You are bone of our bone! It was thou who leddest us out and became a shepherd to us when Saul was king; on that ground, you must be king!" The ground of absolute fellowship; this is not official, and yet it was a great step towards the final fulness in glory of Jerusalem. Well, it is this fellowship which is so necessary to bring about the fulness of Christ which is in view in this letter.

*To be continued*