

## THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SERMON preached at Union Chapel, Bethersden, on Sunday, 8th February, 1959, by the Pastor, Mr. H. Dawson.

Colossians 1. 28.

"Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus."

"Whom we preach:" Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day, and for ever, is the sum and substance of the Gospel which is "The Gospel of Christ". The apostle Paul was ordained of God to preach Christ especially to the Gentiles, and the more you look into the life that he lived after he was born again, the more evident it is that his life was permeated with the Gospel of Christ and his great delight, as every opportunity was afforded, was to preach Christ. One thing stands out in the apostle Paul which is admirable to contemplate, and that is his large-heartedness. This word was penned to the church at Colosse. The apostle Paul had never been to Colosse, yet there was a church of Christ there, and it was evidently a church where the blessing of God had been apparent, and pastor and people had been enabled to live out the Gospel of Christ to a great degree. Some of the epistles the apostle Paul wrote were to churches which, as he was penning the epistles, in his own mind he could remember that God had used his ministry to either found those churches or to build them up, but it was not like that with the church of Christ at Colosse. The apostle Paul, having heard the good news about this church, in his large-heartedness he takes great pleasure therein and he was inspired of God to pen the Epistle to the Colossians to encourage them in God, and to set before them Jesus Christ as he had found Him to be in his own life, wherein "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth could speak". In the

chapter where the subject is found there is a wonderful setting forth of Christ; a wonderful opening up of sound doctrine; and the heading at the top of the page tells us: "The preeminence of Christ in all things"; and whoever is ordained of Christ to preach the Gospel must ever have that thought uppermost in preaching it. "Whom we preach" - the preeminence of Christ in all things; and the dear apostle Paul, being large hearted, as I said, had within his breast what he terms "a great conflict" - margin reading "a great fear or care" - "for I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ". (Col. 2.1.2) This may seem to some of you a heap of words gathered up together, but if grace should be given you to weigh up these words, you would find set forth just a religion that God is the Author of, which every sinner taught of God desires to possess, bringing him into a "full assurance" of his interest in Jesus Christ and Him crucified so that he can declare: "My beloved is mine, and I am His; and His desire is toward me". I say one more word about the setting of the subject, and I do hope some of you, in following the chapter along in the reading of it, did find something touch a chord in your own soul's feelings, and that you can say "Amen" to the desires which the apostle Paul puts down in the chapter; - words like these: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God". That is one of the desires of the righteous.

"Quickened by Thee, and kept alive,  
I'd flourish and bear fruit;  
My life I'd from Thy sap derive,  
My vigour from thy root.

I say a word about the opening of the epistle:- "To the saints and faithful brethren in

Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". The apostle Paul shewed what his feelings were toward this church at Colosse: "We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints". What I want to emphasize is this; if there should come from heaven an inspired epistle "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Bethersden and round about" should you expect it would refer to such a one as you? A letter delivered at your door for you has your name on the outside of the envelope and your address, and it reaches you: what evidence we possess, preacher and people, answerable to being regarded as saints - sanctified, set apart for God - of being "faithful brethren"? It might be well to weigh it up before God, as grace is given, because you and I must answer to such a character to enter into the salvation of God, and be found in the Church of Christ.

I want as the Lord shall help me to look at this subject from one or two viewpoints. The subject is vast, - there are ocean depths in it. Every man who God ordains to preach the Gospel with "Thus saith the Lord," as he gets help from God to preach it, aims to preach Christ. It is not just a question of preaching a sermon, but the Gospel, that it might be known as good tidings of great joy. "Whom we preach", - and yet, when all is said and done, all the preachers ever raised up by God standing upon Zion's walls down through the ages, - what have they done in preaching Christ? Taken a few bucketsful out of the ocean depth, and the ocean depths remain.

"Go, worship at Emmanuel's feet,  
See in His face what wonders meet;  
Earth is too narrow to express  
His worth, His goodness, or His grace."

4.

"Whom we preach". - What a wonderful thing it must have been to have heard the Apostle Paul preach Christ, there must have been in his message an amazing authority; an authority that was God-given. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth could speak". The apostle Paul never lost the impression wrought in his soul on the Damascus road when he was born again, as he was journeying along it, that he might ~~not~~ hale godly men and women, and carry them bound to Jerusalem that they might suffer for being followers of Jesus Christ. His heart overflowed with enmity to Jesus Christ in the doing of it, and then the blessed Spirit of Truth dealt with him when known as Saul of Tarsus, and he was cut down, wrought upon by the Spirit of God, convinced of sin, comforted under the Gospel, built up in it, and made to realize Who Jesus Christ is. After this amazing experience God sends him out to preach the Gospel, and speak well of Jesus Christ, Whose Gospel it is, as you read in the Acts of the Apostles, when he was brought out into a sweet knowledge of his own interest in Christ Jesus "Forthwith he began to preach, and to declare that Jesus is the Son of God". "Whom we preach". He went on to the end of life's journey seizing every opportunity afforded to preach Christ, and he was especially made the Apostle unto the Gentiles, as he says in the context: "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the Word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to His saints; to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the Hope of Glory:" "Whom we preach". Every man whom God sends to preach with divine authority will confess, more and more, what a failure he is in attempting to do it. I like Berridge's words:

"I try and try again,  
To publish Jesu's worth;  
And fain I would, but never can  
Set half His riches forth".

"Whom we preach", and remember the Gospel is to do with Christ, first of all, & last of all.

5.

Not only a wonderful scheme of salvation set forth in the doctrine of it, but "In the volume of the Book it is written of ME." When the two disciples were journeying along the Emmaus road, cast down as they were, sad hearted, seeking to search things out wherein they were so perplexed, "Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them"; and the Word of God tells us so beautifully: "And beginning at Moses", which you know means the Pentateuch, "and in the Psalms, and in the Prophets, He expounded unto them all things in the Scriptures concerning Himself". Oh what a wonderful exposition that was. Many, many times have I wished it had been possible for it to have been recorded and put down in the Word of God. The dear disciples found that their hearts burned within them in listening to it:- "Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, while He opened to us the scriptures?" and I want you to remember, dear friends young and old, that in listening to the Gospel aright it is not just an exposition of doctrine.

Doctrine must be defined, - "Let my heart be sound in Thy statutes, that I be not ashamed"; - but religion that is of God, while it is expressed in a creed, it is most of all "Christ in you, the Hope of Glory"; and through the written word you must come into touch with Him, Who is the Incarnate Word, "Whom we preach". You will find your religion, if it is of God, centres, not in knowing articles of Faith, and being able to define them correctly, and rigidly adhere to them in the letter thereof, no; dear friends religion which is of God is to do with a Person, and that Person is Christ. When you hear the Gospel aright, when Christ is preached, and power attends the proclamation thereof, you will have a feeling like this:

"Compared with Christ, in all beside,  
No comeliness I see;  
The one thing needful, dearest Lord,  
Is to be one with Thee."

At this point I

6.

ask: "What think ye of Christ"? "Whom we preach".

Let us look, as the Lord shall help us, at this word before us from this viewpoint; "Whom we preach" Jesus Christ must be preached as being Who He is: the Son of God, verily God, verily Man. "And without controversy, great in the mystery of Godliness, God was made manifest in the flesh" "Whom we preach" Jesus Christ must be preached as the Mediator: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, The Man Christ Jesus"; and in the chapter, where the subject is found, the mediatorial work of the great Saviour is wonderfully opened up. God gave to the apostle Paul an amazing insight into the truth:- "And you that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled by the body of His flesh, through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprovable in His sight" (Col. 1.21.22). "Whom we preach" "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me". "Whom we preach" as our high priest on high:

"With joy we meditate the Grace,  
Of our High Priest above;  
His Heart is made of tenderness,  
His very Name is Love."

I might add "Whom we preach" as a Saviour, and a great One. Poor sinners love to dwell on that word: "Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God" "Whom we preach" as an uttermost Saviour for uttermost sinners, and that means this:-

"The vilest sinner out of hell,  
Who lives to feel his need,  
Is welcome to the throne of Grace,  
The Saviour's Blood to plead."

"Whom we preach"; we preach the wondrous life that He lived, and the more you are helped to contemplate it the more wonderful it is. Examine every jot and tittle of it, and the more it is to be seen:

7.

"In Him the Father never saw,  
The least transgression of His law,  
In Him we then perfection view,  
The saints in Him are perfect too"

If you examine the life that you have lived, and if you get heaven's own light to help you to do it, the more you look into it the worse it is; thoughts, words, deeds, sin-polluted; and you have to declare: "From the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores". When you look at the life the dear Saviour lived as verily Man, verily God, keeping the law under which He made, He kept it, He magnified the law and made it honourable; yes, and we preach His wondrous life, - the perfection of it, the beauty of it, the necessity of it, - because in that wondrous life under the law He wrought out a righteousness for all the sinners He came down into this world to seek and to save, to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. "Whom we preach". We preach not only His wondrous life, we preach His meritorious death. It is a wonderful mercy when a poor sinner can in heaven's own light contemplate Calvary's Cross, and what was done thereon, and realise what the Word of God declares: "Christ died for our sins," "Christ died for the ungodly" and to realise that when He died on Calvary's Cross he became the:

"Death of death, and hell's destruction"  
"Whom we preach".

"The Saviour died, and by His Blood,  
Brought rebel sinners near to God;  
He died to set poor captives free,  
And say, my soul, why not for thee?"

We preach that on that Easter morn long ago the word went forth: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to

Simon". "Whom we preach" that the dear Saviour still appears to poor sinners who love His appearing. "I am the resurrection, and the life" the dear Saviour declared "Whom we preach". You will desire, if you are taught of God, what the apostle Paul was so concerned to enter in to: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable unto His death". "Whom we preach" that when Jesus Christ rose from the dead, triumphant over sin and death and hell, all the Church of Christ rose in Him then; yes, the Church of Christ, in mystical union with Him then as the Church's living Head, rose from the dead when Jesus Christ came forth a conqueror from the grave. Remember that!

"One in the tomb, one when He rose,  
One when He triumphed o'er His foes;  
One when in heaven He took His Seat,  
And seraphs sang all hell's defeat.

I would emphasize that, as grace is given, because, wherever you may be, poor sinner, whatever trouble beats upon your head, however cast down you are in your circumstances, and you may seem as though you are buried in a grave, yet, as Jesus Christ came forth from the grave on that Easter morn long ago, even so you shall know, in His dealings with you, that He is indeed the resurrection and the life. Yes, you shall prove what the Psalmist said long ago: "O Lord, my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou hast healed me; O Lord, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave, Thou has kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit". "Whom we preach" - the Resurrection and the Life. Much might be said along that line of thought. "Whom we preach", not only that He rose from the dead; but that He ascended up on high and that He is at the Father's right hand "for sinners interceding". "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:"

"He lives! The Great Redeemer lives,  
What joy this blest assurance gives;  
And now before His Father God,  
Pleads the full merits of His Blood."

"Whom we preach". Much might be said under the heading; "Whom we preach", but there is this viewpoint of how we seek to preach Christ crucified. One thing I must make plain from the preacher's viewpoint, that is, if those of us who try to preach knew more in our own souls' experience about Christ we should be better preachers than we are. Our knowledge is very limited; none of us who try to preach know very much about Jesus Christ, our knowledge is very limited, but all we can do, as grace is given, is to continue to try to preach, and encourage poor sinners to hope in Him for Who He is :-

"Whom though we cannot comprehend  
Knowing Thou art the sinners' Friend,  
We love Thee, and adore."

"Whom we preach".  
Look at the subject from this viewpoint: we preach how great He is, He is Almighty God "Whom we preach", and it is a wonderful consideration:

"Almighty God sighed human breath,  
The Lord of Life experienced death;  
How it was done we can't discuss,  
But this we hope, 'twas done for us",

"Whom we preach".  
Jesus Christ, the Sinners' Friend, is great in Who He is as verily God, verily Man. We preach that He is Mighty to save, not only so, we preach how kind He is, and words fail us to tell you how kind He is, He is so kind:

"No sinner was ever yet empty sent back,  
Who came seeking mercy for Jesus' sake."

"Whom we preach".  
"To this man will I look, who is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words" We preach how

powerful He is. The Word of God tells us, and it is the Saviour's own declaration, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth", Yes, we preach how powerful He is; He is able to deliver, able to save. "Whom we preach", we preach too how needful He is, because if you do not know Him "Whom we preach" you will be lost. A very solemn thing it is to live a life that is Christ-less. It is to be feared that the great majority of our fellow creatures do live such a life. I ask you again: "What think ye of Christ"? Is it the truth:

"To me Christ is more precious far,  
Than life and all its comforts are?"

"Whom we preach"  
Jesus Christ is indeed "The one thing needful". We preach how precious He is; precious beyond words to describe. We preach too how worthy He is, and there is that lovely ascription in the Book of Revelations: "Worthy is the Lamb", yes:

"Jesus is worthy to receive,  
Honour and power divine;  
And blessings more than we can give,  
Be, Lord, for ever Thine".

"Whom we preach",  
and I add we preach how suitable He is for poor sinners in their felt need of Him as the sinners' Friend.

"He is needful as our all,  
May we cleave unto Him;  
Every blessing, great and small,  
Flows to Zion through Him."

"Whom we preach".  
We preach how sympathetic He is, how tender in His dealings with poor sinners. A bruised reed He will never break, smoking flax He will never quench. He is the Hope of the hopeless, the Help of

the helpless, He delighteth in mercy, tender mercy,  
"Whom we preach". We preach how faithful He is, and that -

"His promise is Yea and Amen,"  
And never was forfeited yet",

"Whom we preach". The apostle Paul amplifies the line of things that he did preach, I look at it from that viewpoint - Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus". Such were the feelings Paul had that permeated his life as he sought to live the life of the righteous, and as every opportunity was afforded to preach Christ; and no man ordained of God to preach must leave out this aspect of his testimony:

"Warning every man". "Warning every man" that he is a sinner with a never-dying soul, bound for an eternal destiny, either heaven or hell. "Warning every man" - "ye must be born again". "Warning every man" - "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts". "Warning every man!" The apostle amplifies it: "Teaching every man in all wisdom". I have thought of that declaration: "Then Jesus began to preach, and to teach" and I believe I can say before God I send up many a sigh and cry that in my attempts to preach I might also teach, but I am conscious what a failure I am in being the preacher I would be, and ought to be. "Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom", - Paul wanted every one in the church, having their names on the Church Roll, to have sure evidence that their names were also inscribed in the Lambs Book of Life. The dear apostle wanted every church to be all sheep, and no goats, - all wheat, and no tares, and there are not many churches about like that. I would like our church to be such a one, though it is a tremendous responsibility to be the Pastor of such a church. "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may

present every man perfect in Christ Jesus". What the apostle Paul means, as I understand it, is that they should not always be learning the alphabet in things divine, but be able to spell, and put letters together, and make words, and be able "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth to speak", and thus to "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ". (2 Peter 3.18) Thinking on this subject, this word came to my mind, it seems to me opposite: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat, for every one that useth milk is unskilful in the words of righteousness" - margin "hath no experience in the word of righteousness" - "for he is a babe, but strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil". (Heb. 5.13.14) Look at this wording again, dear friends: "Those who by reason of use" - margin, "reason of a habit" - "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil". "Whom we preach - - - that we may present every man perfect". There is this to be known when the sinner is taught of God: "First the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear", and do you say:

"Lord of harvest, grant that we  
Pure and wholesome grain may be".

The word perfect in the text has got this meaning: "mature". Think of it as meaning "ripe", and you will understand it. There should be, as the good work is being brought to it's conclusion in a poor sinner's heart somewhat of maturity, a ripeness in experience, discrimination in judgment, that is the outcome of growing in grace, - "the root downward, the fruit upward." Every man, who God sends to preach, especially one who has the honour and responsibility to be a Pastor, desires that all who love the truth shall have the great

mercy to live in accordance with it, and that it may be evident :

"When on the bough rich fruit we see,  
'Tis then we cry, a goodly tree."

"That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus", - to see people, who are being led into the truth, led into it more and more deeply; and see the good work begun, carried on, completed; and then stand by their graves and see all that is mortal of them laid therein "In sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection to the life everlasting", while the redeemed spirit enters into the "rest that remaineth for the people of God". "That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus". "Whom we preach". "Brethren, pray for us", and the apostle Paul said "And for me, that utterance may be given me" and I say "and for me". "Whom we preach"; and "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be".

Amen.