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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel Brighton
on Wednesday evening 30 June 1926

PHILIPPIANS 3 v 8-11

"Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know Him, 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"

If we have the same spirit respecting Christ and attaining to the knowledge of Him which the Apostle Paul was blessed with, we shall be highly favoured; we must be highly favoured. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness unto him", so that if our hearts are well affected to Jesus Christ, and if our appetite for Him be kept keen, so that we can again, and again appeal to the Lord, and say that our soul's athirst for Him, as a thirsty land, we must esteem ourselves as blessed of God. It is not everybody who names the Name of Christ who really hungers and thirsts after Him. Not everybody who says, "Lord, Lord", enters into the kingdom of heaven. If therefore we have faith, and zeal, and hunger, and emptying of self, a coming into the dust again, and again, and yet have also some spiritual attraction to Christ, we must, I repeat, esteem ourselves highly favoured. Any trifle is enough to divert the mind, as some painfully know, but if the Spirit comes, and keeps the mind, settles the heart, fixes it, so that, though we complain much of barrenness, and of turning aside, yet the heart being in the main in the right place, and direction, that is a blessing from God.

I would direct your attention this evening to the last clause of the 8 verse. "That I may win Christ". What do these words, "win Christ" mean? What may we see in them? What shall we see in them if the Spirit of God teaches us what they mean? What does Christ mean? I do not mean the word, simply, but the Person. What is in Him? "All the fullness of the Godhead bodily". True eternal God. "This is the true God" That is what Christ means. Does He mean that to us? Have we ever had a view of the Deity of the Lord Jesus? seen Him in the bosom of His eternal Father, possessing every attribute of Deity, yet a distinct Person, distinct from the Father and the Holy Ghost. One with them in nature, partaking entirely of the whole nature of God, and yet a distinct Person from Father and Spirit. It is a great mercy to be well set down here. Hart was set down well here. He said

That Christ is God, I can avouch
And for His people cares
Since I have prayed to Him as such
And He has heard my prayers

It is great to be well set down here. General ideas of Christ may very well consist with death in trespasses and sins. Verily consist with a loose profession. But a true conviction of the Lord Jesus as being Very God is a mercy. One effect will be, you will be feeling you can enter into the feelings and language of Peter who, when he found that Christ was near him, said, "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man". No man, seeing Jesus Christ to be Very God, can lightly talk about Him, but he must feel that he is a poor, vile creature, not fit to be near such a person. Christ means that this Person, the Son of God, is also Man, that He was "made of a woman, made under the law", and that His sacred humanity is in such a personal union with Himself, as God, as that that holy thing is called the Son of God. And so truly is He called the Son of God, that when the Apostle Paul commenced the care of the church at Ephesus, to the elders of that church he said: "Feed the church of God which He hath purchased with His Own blood". If we are left to hold this doctrine loosely we shall not follow hard after Him, but if it be well wrought in us, not as a creed simply, but as an essential of salvation, then we shall be following hard after Him from time to time, and not esteem ourselves to have attained but, be following on. This Person dwells between the cherubims. This

Person is the Way to God from death, and hell. This Person is the Rock on which His Church is built. This Person is the Hiding Place for sinners, and such a Hiding Place as that all who are in Him will know by experience that pestilence, and arrows of death flying about, and all kinds of evil, and death, stalking in the night, shall never enter his dwellingplace. We are often frightened about the arrows and the pestilence that walketh in darkness, but they will never enter the habitation that Christ is to us. O, what a mercy it is to believe in Jesus Christ. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith". See if God, the Holy Ghost, has set you down here, and if you cannot see that He has, follow Bunyan's advice, or rather the advice of his minister, holy Mr Gifford as Bunyan called him. This was the advice - "Beg of God to set you well down in every divine truth for, be assured, that whatever you take on trust will fail you in the hour of trial." An untried confidence fails in the hour of trial, that fiery trial that is to try every man's work of what sort it is.

What does this word Christ mean? It means, in the next place, this - "In this was manifested the love of God toward us in that He sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." This Person came to manifest the love of God to His people. Ah, this will kill you to self, and the law, if you get it, this manifestation of the love of God, for you will see more in incarnate Deity to save you than you can ever find in sin to ruin you, and seeing this makes Christ the "Chiefest among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely". Here is Jacob's ladder, here is the new and living way, here is the all-prevailing Name that the Father is pleased to hear, and to hear poor sinners plead. Here is the window of heaven through which the light of life shines in all its splendour, and suitableness, and here is the way that the Holy Ghost takes to come into the hearts of sinners, to rake into the dunghills of their hearts, and thus to show them how they are made holy, and that the whole valley where the dead is, even the whole valley is made holiness to the Lord. O sinner, you cannot be too bad for this love, for this manifestation. You may be a great deal too good for it, but never, never too bad. Well, it is a great thing to be at a point about what this Christ means. All God's goodness is in Him. All the favour of God

is in Him. He is the greatest gift God can give to sinners. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Come repenting sinner, base sinner, corrupt creature, hard-hearted, longing for repentance, praying for a prayer, wishing for faith, come with all the badness, and weakness and all the unbelief, all the prayerlessness, and all the indifference, and all the worldliness of your nature, and I will say this - have no hesitation in saying it - you will get a welcome. What does this word Christ mean? It means righteousness. "That I may win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law". That is, it means a sinner is made just, straight with God's requirements, pure as Christ is pure, acceptable to the Father as Christ is acceptable to the Father. And if you can believe this, you will believe a great deal, and believing this will bring you to your knees, and again, and again, cause a wet spirit, if not wet eyes. You will weep in spirit that a great God could be so kind to such wretched, unjust creatures. It means this also, this blessed word Christ, this divine Person, it means this, holiness. Ah, you will never have holiness on the bells of your horses unless you receive it from Christ. You will never do anything to the glory of God unless you have this holiness given to you by Jesus Christ. Everything the opposite in us. Ah and it is not a little thing to believe that you are a sinner. I find it difficult to lift my head up, being a sinner, and yet it is lifted up at times for me. "Lift up your head for now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." You will never get a smaller sinner. You will get a better Christian in your experience. Your standing will never improve, for that is in Christ, but an experience will grow by the Holy Ghost. But "holiness" - Oh, that word "holiness" - how in my youth it terrified me when it came in that word "pure in heart". God requires truth in the inward part. When Abraham had a promise given to him, he then had to offer sacrifice, and to part the creatures, and in his dream when the horror of great darkness came upon him, behold a lamp, and a furnace, and they went through the parts, and when God will do a sinner good, there goes a lamp, and a furnace through, and through, until,

Shocked at the sight
He straight cries out
Can ever God dwell here?

Then it is manifested to him that God can dwell with him, even him. "The tabernacle of God is with men" and He will dwell with them. And all this means holiness. Do not look for holiness in yourselves. If you do, you will be disappointed. As God teaches you, you will be sinners always, but as Christ comes you will be saints always. He makes saints out of sinners. If there is to be a saint on earth and in heaven, God must make him out of a sinner, for He has no other material now. This is what Christ means, forgiveness; a joyful sound. Forgiveness; it means nearness to God; it means acceptance in the Beloved; it means deliverance from bondage; it means justification in the conscience. It means perseverance in a difficult race and a victory over a powerful enemy. It means heaven. This is what, as I judge, the Apostle Paul had before him when he said "That I may win Christ." Not an empty name, no, a Name replete with love and mercy, wisdom, and power, salvation, and heaven. What a Name. May the Holy Ghost set this Christ before us and then, in the measure in which He is set before us, we shall find the measure of our vehement desire: "That I may win Christ".

But something goes along with it. For whom, for the sake of whom, and to possess whom, I count all things but loss, all things but dross. For the sake of whom, and to win whom, I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung. Now you may say, the first part you like. What of this part? Nothing? Nothing in your hand, nothing to plead, no wisdom, no goodness, no strength. Nothing? No religion. Yes, a good experience you may have, as Paul had, but that was not joined to Christ; it came from Him; but it was not part of Paul's justification, it was not part of Paul's sanctification as standing before God. Real Christian experience comes from Christ, and is never added to Him as He is a Saviour. The branch does not give virtue to the root. The root brings forth virtue, and fruit in the branch, and true experience does not add to Christ, it comes from Him, and it glorifies Him, and it is good beyond all expression; it is good to have it. Well, but it is not easy. What, am I to be nothing at the end? In another case, the Apostle speaking of himself said: "Though I be nothing" - and we may apply it to this case in hand - "Though we be nothing. "Nothing in my hand I bring". Some of you may have said that 50 years ago or less, and today you may be saying, It is not easy today to say it as it was then. It is not as easy today. Why

not? It ought to be, one may say. Yes, but then when you have had this, and that thing from the Lord, when you have been emptied again, and again, from vessel to vessel, when you have had such gracious words from God as have cleansed your conscience from all sin by the atonement, when you have had deliverance on deliverance, then to come just as at the beginning with regard to the Saviour, O this is not easy. And if anybody grows proud of his or her experience, the love of God will say, now you must lose that. Not that you will ever be left to deny it as God's work, but you will lose it in respect of its being a support to you and you may learn this - I know how I learned it - "The Son of Man came to save the lost", and there I found, and said before Him, that the best experience the Spirit of God could work in my soul would not add one iota to the salvation wrought by Christ. Not easy to get through the needle's eye, not easy. Strive to enter. It is this, and this alone. Christ and Christ alone can rightly do the thing. This is the power of God. Christ the power of God to deliver you, to sustain you, to carry on the new creation, to perfect that which concerns you, to give you victory over your enemies, to enable you to say at the last - "O death where is thy sting, O grave where is thy victory. Christ is the wisdom of God to guide you through the difficulties of the way, and to bring you honourably through all. No tongue is worthy to say these things, least of all mine, yet the Lord employs poor, sinful men to speak of His Son, and of Himself, and of the Holy Ghost, for the edification of the body of Christ.

In the next place let me draw your attention to the word "win". "That I may win Christ". I have set Him before you in a poor, feeble manner, but I have tried to set Him before you as you stand in need of Him. Now the Apostle's desire was to win this Person, to gain Him, to obtain Him, to possess Him. What does that mean? It means this, to begin with, that we, in and of ourselves, must be lost. Not merely, not only, lost in the Adam fall; not lost, simply, and only as being lost in our own early conviction; but lost entirely as to all hope in self, as to all wisdom in self, as to all power in self, and just poor creatures who have to say to the Lord, We have no repentance to boast of, no faith to strut about with, and no goodness to bring to Thee; not a penny to buy anything in the market with, but just poor sinners. One may say, that is not difficult. If the person whom I suppose to be

saying that knew ever so little about being a sinner, they would not use such language. It means that we must be devoid of righteousness. "Not having mine own righteousness". That is strange, but it is true. It means there must be some sense of need, real need. Some sense that, unless you have this Person, you must lie in hell for ever. It means that you must have no wisdom, cannot find the way to the city though you fain would enter the city. You feel unbelief. Unbelief is a bitter enemy to Christ and to us. That is on the negative side, and a sad side it is, yet nobody knows what it is to win Christ who does not know, first know, what I said, and much enlargement there might be on this dark and painful side. But it means also, in a positive way, living faith, real persuasion in your mind that this Person Jesus Christ answers to your case, singularly, blessedly, beautifully, in every particular, answers to your case. That it does not matter what you need, the supply is in Him. Life for the dead, light for the blind, righteousness for the wickedness, justification for the unjust, sanctification for the impure, wisdom for the foolish, strength for the weak, victory for the defeated, and heaven for hell. A persuasion of this is a great thing. It makes the mind solid, fixed. You may be a long way from an assurance of possessing Him, but if you have this persuasion of His exceeding suitableness, you have got a good thing. It is a great persuasion, it comes from heaven, and it may bring you to enter into Paul's words in a measure. "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that wait for Him, for them that love Him." And O, the eyes of your mind will be peering, and stretching out, and looking with longing gazes, at that which the Apostle there speaks of, and then you will want what follows on: "But the Spirit hath revealed them unto us, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." And then, as you get glimpses of that fullness, of those unseen, but revealed, things, so full, so suitable, so wonderful, so blessed, then you will say, That I may win them, that is, win Him in whom they all dwell in their fullness. And this faith is such a fixing faith that it will make you long to say with Jacob: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me", and it will kill sometimes your prayerlessness, it will kill your indifference, it will set you longing, and panting, and praying, and waiting, and looking for Him to come. O, sometimes, for an hour or two, how your soul will be panting after Him, and then you will say, I wish I could be

diligent all the day long. I wish I could seek the Lord constantly. And here, let me say, the Apostle did not say this because he had nothing. Who knew as much as Paul of Jesus Christ, the Saviour? Who experienced as much as he did? and yet he said, I have not attained. I do not count myself to have attained, but I want to win Him, to obtain that Person. So his faith stretched itself out, looked for the coming to him of the Lord Jesus. And this brings me to a very important point, namely the labour of the soul. "Let us" says Paul to the Hebrews "labour to enter into that rest lest any of you should seem to come short of it". Perhaps some of you here may be saying, we are afraid, sometimes afraid that we shall never reach that which is attainable. Says Paul, Labour to enter into it. Faith says, it is worth it. Yes, it is worth it. All the loss you may sustain and suffer for Him, all the labour you may have to reach Him, all the anxiety you may feel lest you should miss Him, O my friends, as you get a sight of Him, though it may be distant, you will say, it is worthy. He is worth waiting for, He is worth waiting on, He is worth labouring after. Labour to enter into that rest. When faith goes to Him, it goes to a full fountain, and it says - faith looking at that full fountain, says - You can never ask too much. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." In Him dwells the love of God, and the grace of God. In Him is infinite merit. In Him is justifying righteousness. In Him is compassion. In Him is prevalence in heaven. Everything that a soul can possibly ask for dwells in Him, and this greatly encourages a sinner to labour to enter into that rest. And there will sometimes be, perhaps, on your heart a fear: "Let us therefore fear lest a promise being left us of entering into this rest, any of you should seem to come short of it". "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God". Not lest any man fall from Him, but lest He fail to obtain it. Bunyan speaks of a way to hell by the gate of heaven. Who can say what imitations the devil has made of true religion? Now when faith sees that there is something to be had, that this great Jesus Christ is to be had, yea, that He invites sinners to come to Him, then there begins, and there is carried on, a labour to enter into that rest. What is that rest? The atonement, justification, that is the rest, and the atonement expressed the infinite love, and grace, and death of Christ, and justification expresses the sinner's being clothed with Christ. "This is the Name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" "Lest any of

you should seem to come short of it". O, what an awful thing it is to come short. To see justification and never to be justified. To see a foundation and never to be built on it. And this is what the saint will sometimes be fearing, but it wont do him any harm to be fearing it if the fear arises from a sense, a real feeling in his heart, that he can never rest without that. Press on. Failure can never, never attend a waiting, praying, pressing believer. Christ will say "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt". I think sometimes how pleased He is when He sees a sinner anxious, careful, prayerful, solicitous, jealous lest he should miss that prize such numbers never seek, such numbers seek in vain. It gives Him pleasure. A sinner prostrate at the throne of grace is part of Christ's travail. "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied" He may be a great deal more satisfied with you than you can feel satisfied about your interest in Him. You can hardly believe it. No. Seeing only yourself to be a sinner, and not sure of an interest, how can you think He can be pleased with you? But He sees deeper than the skin, His eye penetrates to the inmost recesses of the soul, and His ear listens to the pantings of the heart when no words go out of the lips.

This winning Christ means laying hold of Him. "Lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art also called". And there is a very striking passage in Isaiah to this point. "Fury is not in Me: who would set the briers and thorns against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." (Isaiah 27 v 4-5). This is laying hold on eternal life when your faith lays hold on Him. Now faith has several degrees, and acts in several ways. Bunyan has one way. He says faith has this, that when it can walk no longer it cries, instancing Peter who said "Save, Lord or I perish" as he was sinking into the water. This is another way or act of faith, that it cleaves to Him. Paul exhorted the saints of old that they would cleave to Christ. This is called, by the Puritans, "the faith of adherence" and it is a faith indeed that wont let Him go. You may take hold of a limpet with your finger and thumb, but you wont dislodge it by that, and the devil, and unbelief, and sin may come, and do come, to a child of God at times and try to pull him away from the Lord Jesus, but they cannot effect it. They will never effect that purpose. Can you let Him go? Can you let Him go? Is He of

so little value in your eyes as that you can lightly let Him go? Does not faith in your heart say to Him "Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee". Does not it say, sometimes - "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee". "To whom shall I go, Thou hast the words of eternal life." O poor sinner, cleave to Him, cleave to Him. He loves you more than you can think and more than you will ever love Him. Wait on Him. "Be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart. Wait I say on the Lord." Lay hold on this. He says, and it is a great word, "Fury is not in Me". "Fury" that you fear "is not in Me". "Fury" that you deserve "is not in Me". Well, what a wonder to faith this is. What a blessing it is to see this and to hear Him say this - "Fury is not in Me". I came, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. I came, not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. And He intercedes without intermitting His love and care for a moment. He ever lives to intercede. And in one very important sense He does not take a bit of notice of the bad condition in which a sinner goes to Him. In another sense He does, and chastens for sin. But when a sinner says, I smote upon my thigh, and after I was chastened I repented, then the Lord does not take notice of his sins, but He says, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? My repentings are kindled together" (Hosea 11 v 8) That is what I mean when I say He does not take a bit of notice of the sins of a sinner who is repenting at His footstool. It is the sins that the sinner sees in himself that stumble him so, but the Saviour is not stumbled. He does not fail, and He shall not be discouraged in the business of saving His people. "That I might win Christ." And the day comes when the little arms - Flavel speaks of them - the little arms of faith open and embrace, and close in with the dear, and gracious, and glorious Saviour, and then the sinner says, He is come. I have won Him, I have held Him, I want never to let Him go. The Church found that she sought Him, and when she found Him she said "I held Him and would not let Him go". There are many pursuits you may engage in that may be lawful, but wont be profitable. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any". (1 Corinthians 6 v 12). Be this our single aim, to win Christ. To get Him into our faith, and hearts. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith". "To walk up and down in His

Name, saith the Lord." Never be satisfied, never rest, till you receive Him. How does He come? By revelation. Who reveals Him. His Spirit. And when Christ is revealed, faith embraces Him, and says: "I found Him and would not let Him go.

I have dwelt on these two words because they are so important, and I want you, and myself, to be well set down here, and never to rest until it please the Holy Ghost to give us this divine satisfaction, that we may say, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth." O He heals the broken heart, He speaks peace to the afflicted conscience, He sets heaven before the hell deserving sinner, "He gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength" You will run, you will mount up with wings as an eagle if you receive this blessed One, Jesus Christ, by faith. You must have conflict, but you will get victory. You must be poor, but you will possess all things. You must be empty, but you will be filled. You must be lost, but you will be saved. Now may the Lord take us in hand, and put us well down in these two things. Bring us here, build us here, settle us here, and the rest will come right, however wrong it may now seem.

AMEN.