

SERMON

PREACHED BY MR L S B HYDE

AT

'SALEM' CHAPEL, CARSHALTON

Text  
Philippians 3, verse 20

Thursday evening  
17th June 1976

For our conversation is in heaven;  
from whence also we look for the  
Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures speak plainly. There is no if or but or perhaps in any part of the Scriptures. In consequence, the Apostle here writes clearly when he says, under the power of the Spirit: 'For our conversation is in heaven.'

A parenthesis takes in the 18th and 19th verses, but if we read the 17th verse, that is the real verse which precedes the verse of our text: 'Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.' And the ensample is this: 'For our conversation is in heaven.'

It is apparent, however, that what pertains today pertained in those days of the Apostle:- 'For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.' To the people of God it is very distressing to find, as the Apostle says here: 'For many walk .....' So it is in the present day, of whom it cannot be said that their conversation is in heaven.

We must, however, consider the point as it is in the Scriptures. It is not for us to lower the standard of the Scriptures, but rather to listen to what the Scriptures have to say, and seek grace that we may know something of that standard which the Scriptures have set up, or set down, whichever way we care to look at it.

Now, we may say in the first instance that what the Apostle refers to here is not the conversation of the carnal mind. The conversation of the carnal mind will never be in heaven, but the conversation, the desires, and the walk of that which is born of the Spirit will always have longings

towards heaven. It is so true that the people of God find within them a conflict; two parts; that which is born of the flesh and that which is born of the Spirit. We should not be surprised if that which is born of the flesh, which is first, should mock and persecute that which is born of the Spirit.

Now it is that which is born of the Spirit which is the burden of the words before us: 'For our conversation is in heaven.' It will be right and good for us to consider this great truth, and to discover whether our conversation is in heaven; because if it isn't, then it will be sad indeed to be numbered among the many who walk 'of whom I have told you often....they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.' We must therefore, as God may give us grace, examine this point of what the Apostle means by this: 'For our conversation is in heaven.'

The Apostle, in writing to the Colossians, he says: 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth.' Now, in consideration of that point, we should not look at it in such a way that there will never be any opposition. We may often feel a great deal of opposition, when our soul cries out for God, for the living God. The hymns that we have sung this evening (986 and 1036) may well be a pointer, if we could endorse them, that our conversation is in heaven. Therein were expressed longing desires after Christ. We may be pressed down with twice ten thousand cares and troubled with many enemies, not least with the enemy which is within the gate, the enmity of the carnal mind. The Psalmist speaks very remarkably when he says: 'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.' It is one thing to talk about the wicked outside, but the Psalmist speaks about the wicked within his heart. And the wicked within our hearts may well stand at quite a vantage point, as it can, in an attempt to drown every desire that would fall in line with these words: 'For our conversation is in heaven.'

In his Epistle to the Ephesians we see the unity of the Spirit in moving the Apostle in his writings. We read in the first chapter: 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.' And again, we read in the same chapter: 'Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.' So it is clear that Christ Himself is in the heavenly places; those places which bring us into a heavenly state of mind. Now perhaps you will say:

"Well, surely we cannot be ever in a heavenly state of mind this side of the grave." We must be in a heavenly state of mind if we are to follow the Apostle when he says: 'For our conversation is in heaven.'

What will our conversation be if it is in heaven? Take the word as it stands -- conversation. That which is thought upon, that which is spoken. It may manifest itself sometimes by groanings of the soul, the longings of the soul after Christ, the fervency of groaning prayers, the lifting of the eye, the falling of a tear when none but God is near -- and your conversation is in heaven. 'There is nothing here can satisfy' -- and your conversation is in heaven. 'Let others stretch their arms like seas, And grasp in all the shore; Grant me the visits of Thy face, And I desire no more.' -- and your conversation is in heaven. 'O, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat' -- and Job's conversation was in heaven. And so we may multiply the instances from the word of God and from the experience of others, but can we multiply the instances in our lives wherein we can say that our conversation was in heaven?

We may look at the prosperity of others, we may see their advancement. We may sometimes be in the same place so vividly described to us by Asaph in the 73rd Psalm, when he is so honest in his confession, and says: 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.' But as we go on, we see that God did not leave him. Can we say that God has not left us when we have been envious at the foolish, when we have seen their prosperity? The time came when the Psalmist, so near perhaps to destruction, was also very near to his conversation being in heaven; and so we read of the turning point: 'Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.' His conversation was in heaven when he said: 'So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.' And now listen to what he says: 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.' So we can surely say that his conversation was in heaven.

The Apostle here, though, says: 'OUR conversation is in heaven.' Now, we may listen to the exhortation: 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.' Can we deduce from some of the points raised that our conversation is in heaven?

Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,  
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek.

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O, so many indications of our conversation being in heaven.

So much for taking the word as it stands here, that is: by exchange of speech and words. But the meaning of conversation, as I am sure most of you know, if not all, has a much wider application. It includes the whole of our lives; not only the words that we speak, but the manner in which we walk, the general bent of our deportment, the way we lean, the direction in which we lean. Will it point to this, that our conversation is in heaven? We turn to the first Psalm and there we read a blessed truth. 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' We may have the negative side, but we need the positive side. The negative will mean nothing without the positive. And so whilst we may feel it is very nice to read these words: 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful;' yet this is the point which will evince that our conversation is in heaven: 'But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' In the 119th Psalm we shall see references made again and again to the love which the Psalmist felt towards God's law. 'Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' And again: 'O, how I love thy testimonies.' There was a great attraction to the word of God. Why was there a great attraction to it? Why was there a love of the Scriptures, even as David had them? Well, it was because they drew his thoughts and his affections toward heavenly things. 'Our conversation is in heaven.' In a way of speaking, we may have in the word of God a reflection of what the conversation in heaven is.

Now, the conversation, the walk of the people of God, is a holy walk. We need not baulk at this word holy, because it is written: 'Be ye holy, for I am holy.' And that which is born of the Spirit is holy; that which is born of God sinneth not. The new birth, it does not touch our carnal nature at all, except that God, in His great mercy, by His power subdues the power of the carnal nature. At the new birth there is an entirely new life given. It is a part which you never had before, and therefore what you could not have before is conversation in heaven, whether it be expressed in desires or words, speech, or in walking out that which you professed, whatever it may be.

How do you know what the conversation of heaven is? How do you know that that conversation is heavenly and holy? By reason of the new nature which is given to you, whereby we are able, whereby you are able, to feel a drawing unto Christ. Now Christ is the centre of all true religion, and therefore if our conversation is in heaven it will be an evidence, a showing forth, of being drawn to Christ.

We shall have many burdens, many things which press us down; and not least the old man of sin. "O, that I had not a myself," said Rutherford. If we find that to be so, what did he mean? His conversation was in heaven. "O, that I had not a myself." The Apostle said: 'But how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I find not....O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' All because his conversation was in heaven. His whole new being, created in Christ Jesus, was in heaven day by day. That new nature was in heaven. Is our new nature proved to be such by being in heaven? Though we may be burdened with an old nature of sin, with a nature which clings to the things of this life, with a nature full of the evils that have been brought in by the fall, depravity and all such things, yet do we discover also a nature whose conversation is in heaven, that looks beyond the veil, or desires to look beyond the veil?

We do want to emphasize and go on to consider this evening that these words may be looked at in desire as well as in accomplishment. If you cannot say: "Well, this is surely accomplished in me;" yet you may be able to say: "I desire that it may be accomplished in me, because I can see that if I am ever to join the celestial choir, join in the everlasting song and crown Him Lord of all, O then I have got to know something about that song here below; and it will only be as and when my conversation is in heaven." So our thoughts will be toward heaven, our desires will be toward heaven, our walk will be toward heaven; and all this because 'it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'

Now, it is the purpose of God that His children should have their conversation in heaven. How clearly the Apostle makes it known that this is where his conversation was. 'Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.' Now, the Apostle would surely say, as others have said: "Follow me as far as I follow Christ." The more our conversation is in heaven, the more we shall be following Christ. When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth,

His conversation was in heaven. It is a very sad reflection, in the profession of the present day, that the conversation of many is of the earth. It is very difficult to get the conversation on heavenly lines, and it makes the hearts of God's true people very sad.

There will be things brought into our lives that will make our conversation to be in heaven. With opened eyes we shall see life in a different way from what we did; we shall see happenings day by day very differently from what we did. Our conversation is in heaven when we think of the mercy of God, when as we walk we feel that the Lord preserves our soul. He preserves us in our going out and in our coming in from this time forth and for evermore. When you go out each day and continue each day, and feel that the Lord's preserving care is over you, body, soul, and spirit, is it not true for us to say that your conversation is in heaven? Not only as you think about it, but as you walk and as you go your various ways, you trust in the Lord and depend upon His preserving care. Perhaps you remember that which we sometimes sing:

Preserved in Jesus when  
My feet made haste to hell;  
And there should I have gone,  
But thou dost all things well;

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As you think upon these lines, and reflect upon the days of your unregeneracy, then your conversation is in heaven. Your praises are ever upwards to the mercy of God, to the favour of God, to the blessing of God, and to the kindness of God in looking down from that high place to see you in your blood, cast out, not wanted, not cared for; and yet the Lord passed by and it was the time of love, and He said: Live. O, to reflect upon these things must of necessity bring your conversation to be in heaven. 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.' It is good for us to remember all the way the Lord has led us, whether it has been 40 days, 40 weeks, 40 months, 40 years, or longer. I say it is the remembrance of these things that will cause us to walk in such a way that our conversation is in heaven. 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.'

Now then, if our conversation is in heaven, it will be manifest in our lives. We look at it like this: first of all, a complete dependence upon Jesus Christ. A complete dependence. Cease from your own works, bad or good, and put your trust in Jesus' blood - and your conversation is in heaven. We may sometimes be troubled by Satan, with regard to his appearing to us as an angel of light, and maybe attempting to induce us to a self-righteous spirit; that is, putting some confidence in ourselves for our

salvation. It will be the mercy of God to us when by His Spirit we are able to say that our conversation is in heaven, that Christ is our salvation.

Jonah's conversation was in heaven when he said: 'Salvation is of the Lord.' That was not the only time, because Jonah's conversation was in heaven when he speaks of his being down in the depths, in the second chapter: 'All thy billows and thy waves passed over me;' and so on. His conversation was in heaven when he was justifying God; and yet he says: 'Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple.' Have you been there sometimes, at the bottom of the sea, like Jonah was literally, but in your feelings? And have you cried at the time of your extremity: 'Yet will I look again toward thy holy temple'? Towards Jesus Christ, towards the hope of your salvation. Jonah's conversation was in heaven, and your conversation will be in heaven when you look from the edge of the pit to His recovering grace.

In the next part of the verse we see that which attracts to heaven. 'From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Looking, hoping, waiting, watching, are very important parts of christian experience. Looking is included in the words of our text: 'From whence also we look for the Saviour.' You know, when the great day comes, when this world will be burnt up, rolled up as a scroll, the people of God, whose conversation is in heaven, will be looking up. Multitudes will be continuing in their earthly cares, so engrossed in all the things of time that this great appearance of the Lord Jesus will take them completely by surprise, embarrass them absolutely, and to such an extent that they will call on the rocks to cover them. Now, every one of us will stand in one of those two categories. Either we shall stand on the rock, or we shall call on the rocks to cover us from the glory of His majesty, when He comes in the clouds with ten thousand of His saints. That day may not be yet; it looks as though it is imminent; but there is a day which is imminent to us all, and that is the day of our death. We should always line up our lives by the day of our death; we should line up our present profession of religion in the face of the day of our death. Will our religion, as it stands at the present, be satisfactory to us in the day of our death? Maybe it is alright now when we are in health, but will it stand when we draw near to our journey's end? That which is of the flesh, that which is a religion that will do for time, will never involve any looking up. But the people of God, whose conversation is in heaven, they will be looking up, because it is from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, every one of the people of God, I am persuaded, will come to their

dying bed looking in that direction; looking in that direction. Are we looking in that direction? We sit here this evening, we are in the congregation this evening, and as far as we can judge we may be in good health. But it has been known for people to be in the congregation and to have passed away before the light of the next morning. It will not do us any harm to weigh things up in the light of such an event. Eternity is before us all.

Eternity, tremendous sound!

To guilty souls a dreadful wound;

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Is there any guilt upon our consciences in relation to our conversation? In looking at these two kinds of people described here, are any of you afraid that you are amongst the many who mind earthly things? You see, this is the crux of the matter, simply put: there are many in a profession who mind earthly things, and there are a few whose conversation is in heaven. So we don't have to go into involved sentences in order to set before you the choice. Now, if you are amongst those who mind earthly things, and death should come upon you this night, then what a sad state you will be in, because you can only end in destruction. O, eternity is a tremendous sound, to guilty souls and malefactors a dreadful wound. But let us look at it from this point of view: if your conversation is in heaven - 'O, if Christ and heaven be mine.' No heaven without Christ, mark you. 'O, if Christ and heaven be mine, How sweet the accents, how divine.' Then you see, heaven cannot come too quickly, can it?

But what is it that attracts us? 'From whence also we look for the Saviour.' Are we looking for the Saviour? We can only speak for ourselves, you know what is in your heart. 'He that believeth hath the witness in himself.' Are we looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ? Are we amongst those who are looking for His appearing? You see, where our treasure is, there will our heart be also. I know there are times when you may say it is a difficult question to answer. "I sometimes wonder where my treasure really is. There seems to be so many things that take my attention. I seem to set an unfair value, an improper value, upon the things which I know are going to vanish away." Well, the many who mind earthly things, they are not quite so concerned in that way.

Now, God proves it. He proves it sometimes by circumstances, and strange circumstances at times. I remember a godly deacon, now in heaven, who told me a few years ago that he returned from a holiday, and he soon became aware that something had happened to his house because the police were round about, and so on. He had had his house broken into. He was a man of some substance,



and he had some choice antiques; and of course he might well have been upset about it. But I shall never forget him telling me this. As he went across the threshold, before he knew whether his loss was great or small, these two lines dropped with power and sweetness upon his spirit: 'He never takes away our all, Himself He gives us still.' And immediately his conversation was in heaven, 'from whence also we look for the Saviour.' He could tell in a moment, the Spirit of God had made it clear where his treasure was. He was not without treasure on this earth, but in heaven his choicest treasure laid; and God made it clear.

Now, I just use that as an example, because if you are in a doubt in your own mind - "I wish I knew where my treasure was" - well, God will make it clear. He may not make it clear in the way that I have spoken of, but He will make it clear. 'I could from all things parted be, But never, never, Lord, from Thee.' God will make it clear. When He does, without any doubt your conversation will be in heaven. And what kind of conversation will that be? 'Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.' Then as we go on in the 103rd Psalm, we see how the Psalmist enumerates these things. 'Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;' and so on. His conversation was in heaven, from whence also he looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, is the Lord our Saviour? Do we need a Saviour, One Who is able to save unto the uttermost? There is one part of Scripture which refers to the Lord Jesus as 'our God and Saviour'. Is that true concerning your salvation? Then it is no less that the Almighty God Who is your Saviour. Mr Hart has a vivid word upon this, when he says:

Almighty God sighed human breath!  
The Lord of life experienced death!  
How it was done we can't discuss,  
But this we know, 'twas done for us.

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And when your conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ - it will be Jesus the Almighty God in human flesh. He took upon Him flesh that He might die; and yet, you see, when the disciples went to the sepulchre, after He had been laid there following His crucifixion, the shining ones said: 'He is not here, He is risen; come, see the place where the Lord lay.' It was not to be forgotten, but He is not here now, He is risen. And so we may go along with those disciples to Mount Olivet, and there He blessed them. As He blessed them He vanished out of their sight, and they saw Him go up into heaven. So they knew where He was. There were those that stood by that said unto those disciples:

'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.' Well now, with such a vivid revelation as that, you will certainly be amongst those whose conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you know, He is ascended, then that is the place to which you will be looking for Him to appear again. Now, those whose conversation is in heaven will love His appearing. It is a spiritual exercise to love His appearing. It is a spiritual exercise to be looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, for a spiritual revelation of Him. Your very soul may be, as it were, enlivened. Sometimes even the earth itself, the world itself, our flesh itself, the devil himself too, all conspire to affect our souls so that the freshness is lost, and we cry out for God, for the living God. We are at the ends of the earth. And what do you want under these conditions? Revelation, revelation, revelation. A revelation of what? That Jesus Christ is alive. It is a wonderful mercy to know that Jesus Christ is alive; and if your conversation is in heaven, it will be because Jesus Christ is alive. He is not only alive in heaven, He is alive in your soul also.

We have in the 57th chapter of Isaiah: 'For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' So Jesus truly is alive in heaven; the Spirit of Christ is alive in the soul. And it is because of this great truth that the conversation of the people of God is in heaven. Nothing to do with their natural part, their carnal part, for we are earthen vessels made meet for the Master's use.

'From whence also we look for the Saviour.' It would be very sad if we were to discover that we are looking in an entirely wrong direction, but it isn't so. If the Lord has ever blessedly applied to your soul the view that was in the eyes of the disciples when the Lord went up into heaven, then you will know where to look; and it won't be just a fleeting glance. O, that it were so with us every day, every morning, that we were looking, looking for the appearing of that blessed hope; praying: "Will it be that the Lord will reveal Himself to me today in a way that I have never seen before, to an extent that I have never realized before, so that I get a different feeling and a different view of that Scripture: Unto you therefore which believe He is precious." And that preciousness is intensified according to the revelations given to us.

'For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Well, what will happen when the Saviour appears? We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. We shall be like Him. Now, that will be attractive, and an inspiration of our conversation being in heaven; an anticipation of that day when we shall be changed from glory into glory, or as we have it in the next verse: 'Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.'

That which we have sown in weakness this evening, may the Lord raise in the greatness of His power; for His Name's sake.

Amen.

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