

The Priceless Prize

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately exhorts believers and seekers to value Christ above all else, emphasizing that without Christ, all worldly gains are meaningless and eternal loss is certain.

Scripture: Philippians 3:8, John 11:43, Luke 23:43, Ecclesiastes 1:2, Psalm 23:4

Topics: "Worldly Vanity"

Description

In 'The Priceless Prize,' C.H. Spurgeon passionately calls listeners to recognize the incomparable value of Christ above all worldly possessions and honors. He vividly describes the perilous state of those without Christ and the emptiness of earthly riches and pleasures. Drawing on biblical truths and historical examples, Spurgeon urges a heartfelt pursuit of Christ as the only true source of salvation and eternal joy. This evangelistic sermon challenges all to consider what they are willing to lose or gain for the sake of Christ.

Transcript

"That I may win Christ." Philippians 3:8.

THE very high value that the Apostle Paul set upon the Savior is most palpable when he speaks of winning Him. This shows that the Savior held the same place in Paul's esteem as the crown did in the esteem of the runner at the Olympic games. To gain that crown, the competitor strained every nerve and sinew, feeling as though he were content to drop down dead at the goal if he might but win it. Paul felt that were he to run with all his might, if that were the way of winning Christ—were he to strain soul and body to win Him, He would be well worth the effort. He shows his value of Christ by speaking of Him as the prize he panted to win. He uses the very same words which the soldier would use concerning the victory when, with garments rolled in blood, amidst confused noise and clouds of smoke, he counts all things but little if he may but hear the shout of triumph. So, Paul, regarding Christ as more glorious and excellent than mountains of prey, considered such a prize to be worth all the fighting, even though he should agonize and sweat with blood! He would be well worth dying to win. I take it that he speaks of Christ here as though he felt that He was the very climax of his desire, the summit of his ambition. If he might but get Christ, he would be perfectly satisfied—but if he could not get Him—whatever else he might have, he would still remain unblessed.

I would to God that you all felt the same. I wish that the ambition of every one of my fellow creatures here assem-bled—and, indeed, the wide world over—were this, that they might win Christ! Oh, if they did but

know His precious-ness, if they did but understand how happy and how blessed He makes those to be who gain Him, they, too, would give up everything else for this one desire—that they may win Christ! I hope that, perhaps, a few words of mine may be blessed of God the Spirit to stir up such a desire in the hearts of the congregation now assembled. How, then, shall I begin?

I. WHILE YOU HAVE NOT CHRIST, YOU ARE IN A VERY BAD CONDITION—SHOULD NOT THIS MAKE YOU LONG FOR HIM?

Consider, my dear Hearer, you who are Christless tonight, what you are and where you are. You are a sinner—that you know. Without Christ you are an unpardoned sinner, a condemned sinner and, before long you will be a sinner judged, sentenced and cast into Hell! Do you not know that? You are a diseased sinner. Sin is the leprosy which is in you and, without Christ, you are sick without a physician. For you there is no balm in Gilead, no physician there. Your sickness is mortal! It will certainly be your ruin, for you have no Savior. You are a mortal—you cannot doubt it. You will soon die and can you tell what it will be to die without Christ? Have you ever formed an idea of what it will be to pass into the realm of separate spirits with no rod to lean on and no staff to comfort you in the dark valley? Man, you are an immortalbeing! You know that, too! You will not cease to be when you die. You will live again—and what will it be to live again without Christ? It will be to live the life of a condemned spirit, withered by the wrath of God, scathed by the lightning of Divine Justice! Can you think of that without dismay?—

"Sinner, is your heart at rest?

Is your bosom void of fear?

Are you not by guilt oppressed?

Speaks not conscience in your ear?

Can this world afford you bliss?

Can it chase away your gloom?

Flattering, false, and vain it is— Tremble at the worldling's doom!"

Why, even now, I think I can see you. You are like the ship upon the lake of Gennesaret, tempest-tossed. The winds howl about her, every timber creaks, the sail is torn to pieces and the mast is going by the board! And for you there is no Savior to come and walk the billows, and to say, "It is I, be not afraid!" At the helm of your ship there sleeps no Savior who can arise and say to the waves, "Peace, be still!" You are a ship in a storm, with none to rescue you, seeing that you have no Savior. The devil has scuttled you. There are holes bored through and through your spirit's hope and confidence—and it will go down, before long, in depths of unutterable woe!

I think I see you again. You are like Lazarus in the grave, and by this time you are foul and noxious, for you have been dead these 30 or 40 years and that death has festered into putrid corruption. Yes, there you are, and you have no Christ to say, "Roll away the stone." You have no Christ to say, "Lazarus, come forth!" No Savior to bid your friends loosen you and let you go! I think I see you yet again. You have been singing of the dying thief. We often sing of him. And you will die as the thief died, only—only there will be no Christ hanging on the Cross from whom you shall hear the words—"This day shall you be with Me in Paradise."

Unto what shall I liken you and with what shall I compare you? A soul without Christ! Why, it were better for you that you had never been born if you continue so! You would be better off with the millstone about your neck and cast into the sea, if that would make an end of you! You would be far happier, then, than you now are without Christ, for without Christ you are without God and without hope in the world! You are a sheep lost on the mountains and no Shepherd to find you—a soul wandering in the blackness of darkness, and no lamp to guide your wandering footsteps! And soon you will be a desolate spirit, without a ray of comfort, without a home, shut out in the blackness of darkness forever! Does not that make you long for Christ? It would if I could make you feel what I can only say! I can only deal with your outward ears—my Master must deal with your hearts—and I do pray Him, by His Almighty Spirit, to make you feel so wretched without Christ that you will not dare to sleep tonight until you have sought Him, laid hold upon Him and said to Him, "I will not let You go, except You bless me."

O you souls out of Christ, I could, with half a moment's thought, stop and burst into tears and say no more! But I must command myself, for I must speak to you—and I do pray you, by the living God, unless you are beside yourselves, if you have any love to your own souls, fly to Christ! Seek the Lord! Try to lay hold upon Him, for as you now are, your position is perilous in the extreme!—

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away Like doves to Jesus' wounds! This is the welcome Gospel-Day, Wherein Free Grace abounds! God loved the Church and gave His Son To drink the cup of wrath. And Jesus says He'll cast out none That come to Him by faith."

II. We will now change the strain, but not the objective. Remember that ALL THE THINGS IN THE WORLD

ARE VAIN WITHOUT CHRIST.

The world's goods, its substance, its riches, its pleasures, its pomp, its fame—what are all these without Christ? They are a painted pageantry to go to Hell in! They are a mockery to an immortal spirit! They are a mirage of the wilderness, deluding the traveler, but not yielding to his desires one substantial drop of joy! There have been those in this world who have tried it, and they say, "It sounds, it sounds, it sounds, because it is empty and hollow as a drum." It is—

"False as the smooth, deceitful sea, And empty as the whistling wind."

There is nothing in it all—

"Honor's a puff of noisy breath, And gain a heap of yellow clay."

And what is even power itself, but anxiety and care? Solomon knew the world at its best and his verdict upon her was, "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Without Christ, Sinner, you will find the world

to be unsatisfactory. When you have tried it at its best, you will turn from it and say, "I have been deceived! I have eaten the wind and I am not satisfied. I am like one that feasts in a dream, and wakes and, lo—he is hungry!" Without Christ you will not even find this world to be comfortable. Perhaps there are none so unhappy as those who are surrounded with what we think to be the means of happiness. I know this—if I had to find the extreme of wretchedness, I should not go to the dens of poverty, but I should go among men surrounded with the trappings of wealth and find your hearts broken with anguish and spirits wrung with griefs which they could not tell! Oh, yes, the world is a heap of chaff! The only solid treasure is to be

found in Christ! But if you neglect Him, you neglect all that is worth having!

Besides, all this world must soon pass away. See how it melts! Or, if it melts not from you, you must melt from it. Down goes the ship! She floated gaily but an hour before, but she foundered and she is gone! And now, merchant, what will you do? Your vessel has gone down with all your treasure on board and you are left penniless! Oh, happy are they who lay up their treasure in Christ, for no shipwreck need they fear! But, oh!—

"This world's a dream, an empty show"—which cannot satisfy an immortal soul!

Further than this, let me remind you, my dear Hearer, that if you have not Christ, nothing else will be of use for you. A profession of religion will only be a sort of respectable pall to throw over the corpse of your dead soul! No, a profession of religion, if you have not Christ in it, will be a swift witness against you to condemn you! What right have you to profess to be a follower of Christ unless Christ is, in you, the hope of Glory? And to have listened to the ministry of the Word will be of no use to you if you do not get Christ. Alas, alas, what can our poor sermons do? Our prayers, our hymns—what are they? Ah, and what will your Baptism be—and what will the Lord's Supper be unless by faith you grasp a Savior? These ordinances, though ordained by God, Himself, are wells without water and clouds without rain unless they get us Christ, who is the sum and substance of them all! It will be of no use to you that you were regular in your private prayers, that you were good to the poor, that you were generous to the Church, that you were constantly in attendance upon the outward means of Grace. I say, as I said before, that all these are but a painted pageantry for your soul to go to Hell in, unless you have Christ! You may as surely go down to the Pit by the religious road as by the irreligious. If you have not Christ, you have not salvation, whatever else you may have—

"Give me Christ, or else I die"—should be your daily and nightly prayer, for all else will destroy you if you have not the Savior!

And let me tell you, dear Hearer, that your repentance, if it does not lead you to Christ, will need to be repented of! And your faith, if it is not based upon His atoning Sacrifice, is a faith that is not the faith of God's elect! And all your convictions of sin—all the visions that have scared you, all the fears that have haunted you—will only be a prelude to something worse unless you get Christ! There is one door and if you go not through that, climbing up some other way, though it is never so tedious, will not answer your turn. You must go down to Hell after all your efforts, all your repent-ings, all your believing, unless your soul can say—

"My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness! I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' name— On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand, All other ground is sinking sand!" Oh, how this ought to make you long for Christ, when you think that everything else is but a bauble when compared with Him! And think what a state you are in as long as you are destitute of Him!

III. I must not tarry, so let me remind you, my dear Hearer, though you cannot possibly know how anxious I am to speak so that you may feel what I say, that **NOTHING CAN MAKE AMENDS TO YOU FOR LOSING CHRIST.**

I know how it is with some of you. You say you cannot afford to follow Christ. Your trade—your wicked trade— you would have to give that up, for it happens to be an ungodly calling. Well now, Friend, let me take you by the button-hole a minute. Which had you better be—a beggar and go to Heaven, or a

duke—and go to Hell? Come, now, which had you better do—go to Heaven with an empty pocket or go down to the Pit with a full one? All you who worship Mammon, I know how you will answer, but you who have souls above earth, I hope you will reply, "Nothing in the

form of wealth will compensate us for losing our souls." Men have been known, on their dying beds, to have their moneybags brought to them—and they have put them to their hearts and have said, "This won't do," and they have taken up another and put it to their palpitating hearts, and said again, "This won't do." Ah, no, it cannot cure a heartache! What can it do for a soul in eternity? Is it not a painful thing to attend upon some men who die rich in ill-gotten gain? What are they the better for their wealth? They only have it said of them, "He died worth so much." That is all, but they sleep in the same earth and the same worms devour them! There is more fighting over their graves among the heirs who divide the plunder and more joy because they are gone! While oftentimes the poor man has the honest tears of his children shed upon a coffin which they have had to contribute to purchase out of their little savings and the grave, itself, has been prepared by the charity of some who found in their father's character the only patrimony which he had to bequeath. Oh, may God grant you Grace to perceive that all the riches you can ever get would never make up for losing Christ!

Some lose Christ for the sake of fame. It is not a fashionable thing to be a Christian. To be a Christian after the world's sort, I grant you—is but after the sort of the New Testament, it is not! And many say, "Well, it is not fashionable," and they bend to the fashion. And many do the same in another way, for young men are laughed out of going to the House of God and young women are decoyed from attending the means of Grace by the laughter, jeers and jokes of their companions. Remember that they can laugh you into Hell, but they can never laugh you out again! And that though their jokes may shut the door, their jokes can never open that door again. Oh, is this all? Will you sell your souls to escape from a fool's laughter? Then, what a fool you must be! What? Are you so thin-skinned that you cannot bear to be questioned, or to be asked whether you are a follower of the Lord Jesus? Ah, Sir, you shall have that thin skin of yours tormented more than enough in the world to come, when shame, which you dread so much, shall be your everlasting portion! O Soul, how can you sell Christ for the applause of men? How can you give Him up for the laughter of fools?

Some give Jesus Christ up for the pleasures of the world, but can the giddy dance for a few minutes of this life be worth the torments of the world to come? Oh, weigh, like wise men—as merchants weigh their goods against the gold—I pray you, weigh your souls against the pleasures of this world! Oh, where is the pleasure? Even Tiberius, in his desert island, when he had ransacked the world to find a new joy, could not, if he could give us all the mirth he knew, tell us of anything that would be worth the casting away of the soul! This pearl is too priceless for the world to attempt to purchase! I pray you, be wise enough to feel that nothing can compensate you for this loss! Seek Jesus and may you find Him tonight!

IV. A fourth observation upon which I shall not enlarge, is this—DEPEND UPON IT, THAT WHATEVER YOU

LOSE FOR CHRIST'S SAKE WILL BE A BLESSED LOSS FOR YOU!

Gregory Nazianzen, a foremost father of the Christian Church, rejoiced that he was well versed in the Athenian philosophy—and why do you think he rejoiced in that? Because he had to give it all up when he became a Christian! And he said, "I thank God that I had a philosophy to throw away." He counted it no loss, but a gain, to be a loser of such learned lumber when he found a Savior! An old Divine said, "Who

would refuse to give up a whole sky full of stars if he could buy a sun with them? And who would refuse to give up all the comforts of this life if he could have Christ at so goodly a price?" That grand old Ignatius, one of the earliest of the Church fathers, said, "Give me burning, give me hanging, give me all the torments of Hell if I may but get my Savior! I would gladly be content to bear them all as a price." And so might we! Did I not tell you of the martyrs sitting and singing in old Bonner's damp coal-hole, and one of them writing, "There are six brave companions with me in this paradise, and we do sit and sing in the dark all day"? Ah, yes, they were no losers! Did not Rutherford say when he declared that he had but one eye and his enemies had put that out—for that one eye was the preaching of the Gospel, an eye to the glory of God—and his enemies had made him silent in Aberdeen, so that he used to weep over his dumb and silent Sabbaths? Yet did he not say, "But how mistaken they are! They thought they sent me to a dungeon, but Christ has been so precious to me that I thought it to be the king's parlor and the very Paradise of God"?

And did not Renwick say that oftentimes, when he had been out among the bogs on the Scotch mountains, hunted over the mosses, with the stars of God looking down upon the little congregation, that they had far more of God's fellowship than bishops had ever had in cathedrals, or than they, themselves, had ever had in their circles when, in brighter days, they had worshipped God in peace? The dragoons of Claverhouse and the uniformity of Charles II were incapable of quenching the joy of our Puritan and Covenanting forefathers! Their piety drew its mirth from deeper springs than kings

could stop, or persecution could dry up. The saints of Christ have given Christ their all—and when they have given all, they have felt that they were the richer for their poverty and the happier for their sorrows! And when they have been in solitude for Christ, they have felt that they have had good company, for He has been with them to be their strength and their joy. You may have Christ at whatever price you will, but you will make a good bargain of it! I charge you, my dear Hearer, if it should come to this—that if you should have to sell your house and your home, if the wife of your bosom should become your enemy, if your children should refuse to know their own father or to look him in the face, if you should be banished from your country, if there should be a halter for your neck, and no grave for your body—you would make a good bargain in taking up my Lord and Master, for oh, He will claim you in the day when men disown you—and in the day when He comes, there shall be none so bright as those who have suffered for Him—

"And they who, with their Leader,

Have conquered in the fight,

Forever and forever

Are clad in robes of white!"

Yes, if you suffer with Him, you shall also be glorified together! God grant you Grace to feel this to be true and to make any sacrifice as long as you can but "win Christ, and be found in Him."

V. IF EVER YOU GET CHRIST, YOU WILL FIND HIM ALL GAIN AND NO LOSS!

The Apostle says, "That I may win Christ" It is all winning and no losing. Why, if you get Christ, you will get life! Does He not give life and immortality to those that have Him? Yes, for He says, "he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." If you get Christ, you will get light. He said, "I am the light of the world: he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness." The Sun of Righteousness shall arise upon you!

Get Christ and you shall get health—your soul shall leave her sicknesses with Him who bore her sickness in the days of His flesh. Get Christ and you shall get riches, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." You may be poor, perhaps, outwardly, but you shall be rich, yourselves, and be able to make many others rich—rich in faith, giving glory to God! Get Christ and prosperity shall not hurt you—your feet shall be like hinds' feet, to stand upon your high places. Get Christ and He will turn your bitter Marahs into sweet Elims. He is the Tree which, when put into the brackish water, makes it sweet to the taste. Affliction is no longer affliction when Christ is with us! Then the furnace glows, not with heat, alone, but with a golden Radiance, a present Glory when Christ treads the burning coals!

Get Christ, Beloved, and you have got all your soul can wish for Now may you stretch your capacious powers to the utmost and, with a holy covetousness and a sacred greediness, desire all you can! You may open your mouth wide, for Christ will fill it. You may enlarge your desires, but the infinite riches of Christ will satisfy them at their largest and widest stretch. Get Christ and you have Heaven on earth, and shall have Heaven forever! Get Christ, and angels shall be your servitors! The wheels of Providence shall grind for your good, the chariot of God, which brings on the events prophesied in apocalyptic vision, shall bring only joy and peace to you—and you shall hear it said, both in time and in eternity—

"'Tis with the righteous well." Get Christ and you have nothing to fear, and everything to hope for Get Christ and sin is buried in the Red Sea of Jesus' blood, while you are arrayed in the spotless righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ—Jehovah Tsidkenu, Himself! Get Christ and—what more shall I say? Then may you swim in seas of bliss! Then may you walk Elysian fields of holy joy even here on earth! Get Christ and you need not envy the angels! Get Christ and you may count yourselves to be raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places with Him!

Surely all this ought to make the sinner's mouth water to get Christ! It ought to make his heart ache till he gets Christ! It ought to set his soul a-hungering and a-thirsting till he gets Jesus! It ought to make him resolve that he will not be kept back till at last he gets a firm hold upon the Crucified!

VI. My last remark shall be this—WE SHALL UNDERSTAND ALL THIS A GREAT DEAL BETTER VERY SOON.

There is a curtain, but it is lifting, it is lifting, it is lifting—and when it is lifted, what do I see? The spirit world! 'Tis death that lifts the curtain and when it is lifted, these present things will vanish, for they are but shadows. The world of eternity and reality will then be seen. I would summon a jury of the spirits that have passed that curtain and they would not be long debating about the question whether Christ is worth the winning! I care not where you select them

from—whether from among the condemned in Hell, or from among the beatified in Heaven. Let them sit, let even those who are in Hells it and judge upon the matter. And if they could for once speak honestly, they would tell you that it is a dreadful thing to despise Christ, now that they have come to see things in a true light—now that they are lost forever, forever, forever—now that they are crushed with knowledge and feeling which have come too late to be profitable— now they wish that they had listened to the ministrations of the Truth of God, to the proclamations of the Gospel! If they could have a sane mind back again, they would shriek, "Oh, for one more Sabbath! Oh, to listen once more to an honest preacher, though his words might be clumsy and uncouth! Oh, to hear a voice once more say, 'Come to Jesus while the Day of Mercy lasts!' Oh, to be once more pressed to come to the marriage feast—once more bid to look to Jesus and to live!" I tell you Sirs, some of you who make so light of Sundays and think preaching is

but a pastime, so that you come here to hear us as you would go to hear some fiddler on a weeknight—I tell you, Sirs, the lost in Hell reckon these things at a very different rate! And so will you before long, when another preacher, with skeleton fingers, shall talk to you upon your deathbed. Ah, then you will see that we were in earnest and you were the players—then you will comprehend that what we said to you demanded earnest, immediate attention, though, alas, you would not give it—and so played false to your own soul, committed spiritual suicide and went your way like a bullock to the slaughter—to be the murderers of your own spirits!

But suppose I summoned a jury of bright spirits from Heaven? Ah, they would not need to consider, but I am sure they would unanimously say to you, if they might, "Seek you the Lord while He may be found! Seek the Lord and His strength. Seek the Lord and His face always—put your trust in Jesus, for He is sweet beyond all sweetness." May you do this and may you sing—

"Oh, spread Your savor on my frame, No sweetness is so sweet! Till I get up to sing Your name Where all Your singers meet."

Pray that prayer. Ask Him to save you and may the Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PHILIPPIANS3.

Verse 1. Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. Let this be the end of everything, before you get to the end of it. And when you do get to the end of it, "rejoice in the Lord." It is incumbent upon us, as Christians, to rise out of our despondencies. Joy should be the normal state of the Christian. What a happy religion is ours in which it is a duty to be happy! "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord."

1. To write the same things to you, to me, indeed, is not grievous, but for you it is safe. To go over the same old Truths again and again, to proclaim the same precepts and teach the same Doctrines is not grievous to us, and it is safe for you to hear these things again and again. If they have not made their due impression upon you, already, perhaps they will do so when they are repeated in your hearing. At any rate, it is safe for you to hear or read over and over again the old, old story with which you are already familiar.

2. Beware of dogs. Contentious persons—persons of coarse and corrupt habits. "Beware of dogs."

2. Beware of evil workers. However prettily they may talk, if they are workers of evil, beware of them. "By their fruits you shall know them." Their speech may be clever, but if their lips are unclean, beware of them.

2. Beware of the concision. Beware of the cutters off, those who excommunicate and cut off others because they do not happen to agree with them in certain rites and ceremonies.

3. For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. This is the real circumcision which is of the spirit and not of the flesh. The men who have abandoned all confidence in themselves. The men who have come to rely upon Christ, alone. The men who "rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," those who care not for outward rites and ceremonies, but who worship God in the spirit— these are the true circumcision!

4. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. "If any man might trust in outward religion, I might," said Paul, yet he was the very man who would not do so, and who warned others against doing it!

4-6. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eight day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the Law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless. So that if anybody could have boasted of what he was by birth, what he was by profession, what he was by the display of religious zeal—Paul could have boasted as boldly as anyone could, for in all those respects he was second to nobody! You know that it is a very easy thing, or it ought to be a very easy thing, for some people to be humble, for they have nothing to be proud of—but here is a man who had much of which he might have been proud! According to the letter of the Law, he was a diamond of the first water, yet see what a different verdict he gives after Divine Grace has opened his eyes!

7-9. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ Yes, indeed, 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 my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. [See Sermon #1357, Volume 23—A businesslike ACCOUNT.] Everything else must go in order to secure that.

Paul thinks that to be righteous by faith is infinitely better than all the righteousness that can come by works and ceremonies. He therefore utterly despises that which he once thought to be more precious than gold! And he takes possession of, as his greatest treasure, that which he once trampled in the mire. Now his great desire is—

10-12. That I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made comfortable unto His death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect You, perhaps, suppose that Paul's present satisfaction arises out of a consciousness of personal perfection, but it is not so. He has not won the race yet—his joy arises from the fact that he is on the right course and that he is running in the right direction! "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect."

12. But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. [See Sermon #2315,

Volume 39—PAUL APPREHENDED AND APPREHENDING.] "I want to lay

hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. He has grasped me in order to make me perfect and I want to grasp that perfection. He has laid hold of me to rid me of my sin and I want to lay hold of a clean riddance of sin, apprehending that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

13-15. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are mature, be thus minded: and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. If you are a true Believer in Jesus, be of this mind—always to be pressing forward to something higher and better. If God has given you one form of maturity, press onward to a much higher form. Seek continually to rise. The eagle's motto is, "Higher, Higher!" Let it be your motto, too. Many of God's people do not believe that He can make them what He means to make them, or, at least, they act as if they did not believe that He can. They apparently are not conscious of what their privileges really are and are living far below where they might live in the happy enjoyment of peace and power and usefulness! May God help us, by His gracious Spirit, to know all

of Christ that we can and to be as much like Christ as we can.

16-18. Nevertheless, to the degree 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 you have us for an example. (For many walk)—I suppose Paul is referring to many even in the Church of his day. "For many walk"—

18. Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ

[See Sermons #102, Volume 2—FALSE PROFESSORS SOLEMNLY WARNED and #2553, Volume 44—THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST.] The worst enemies that the Cross of Christ has are the enemies inside the professing Church of Christ!

19. Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. They call themselves spiritual, yet they live for earthly things, indulging their appetites, living for self, yet pretending to be Christians, whereas selfishness is the very reverse of Christianity.

20, 21. For our conversation is in Heaven; from where also we look for thee Savior, thee Lord Jesus Christ: 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 [See Sermon #973, Volume 17—THE POWER OF CHRIST ILLUSTRATED BY THE RESURRECTION.]

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