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CHRIST IS ALL

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

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CHRIST IS ALL

“Christ is all.”—Colossians 3:11

THE words of the text which heads this page are few, short, and soon spoken; but they contain great things. Like those golden sayings, “To me to live is Christ,” “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,” they are singularly rich and suggestive (Phi 1:21; Gal 2:20).

These three words are the essence and substance of Christianity. If our hearts can really go along with them, it is well with our souls. If not, we may be sure we have yet much to learn.

Let me try to set before my readers in what sense Christ is all, and let me ask them, as they read, to judge themselves honestly, that they may not make shipwreck in the judgment of the Last Day.

I purposely close this volume with a message on this remarkable text. Christ is the mainspring both of doctrinal and practical Christianity. A right knowledge of Christ is essential to a right knowledge of sanctification as well as justification. He that follows after holiness will make no progress unless he gives to Christ His rightful place. I began the volume¹ with a plain statement about sin. Let me end it with an equally plain statement about Christ.

¹ **volume** – the reference is to Ryle’s book, *Holiness*, of which this article, *Christ Is All*, is chapter 20.

1. Christ Is All in the Counsels of God.

a. When earth had no being

There was a time when this earth had no being. Solid as the mountains look, boundless as the sea appears, high as the stars in heaven look, they once did not exist. And man, with all the high thoughts he now has of himself, was a creature unknown. And where was Christ then?

Even then Christ was “with God” and “was God” and was “equal with God” (Joh 1:1; Phi 2:6). Even then He was the beloved Son of the Father. “Thou lovedst me,” He says, “before the foundation of the world” (Joh 17:24). “I had glory with thee before the world began.” “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Joh 17:5, 24; Pro 8:23). Even then He was the Saviour if “foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1Pe 1:20), and believers were “chosen in him” (Eph 1:4).

b. When earth was created in its present order

There came a time when this earth was created in its present order. Sun, moon and stars, sea, land and all their inhabitants, were called into being and made out of chaos and confusion. And, last of all, man was formed out of the dust of the ground. And where was Christ then?

Hear what the Scripture says: “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Joh 1:3). “By him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth” (Col 1:16). “And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands” (Heb 1:10). “When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him” (Pro 8:27-30). Can we wonder that the Lord Jesus, in His preaching, should continually draw lessons from the book of nature? When He spoke of the sheep, the fish, the ravens, the corn, the lilies, the fig tree, the vine, He spoke of things which He Himself had made (Heb 1:2).

c. When sin entered the world

There came a day when sin entered the world. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and fell. They lost that holy nature in which they were first formed. They forfeited the friendship and favor of God, and became guilty, corrupt, helpless, hopeless sinners. Sin came as a barrier between themselves and their holy Father in heaven. Had He dealt with them according to their deserts, there had been nothing before them but death, hell, and everlasting ruin. And where was Christ then?

In that very day He was revealed to our trembling parents as the only hope of salvation. The very day they fell, they were told that the seed of the woman should yet bruise the serpent’s head, that a Saviour born of a woman should overcome the devil, and win for sinful man an entrance to eternal life (Gen 3:15). Christ was held up as the true light of the world, in the very day of the Fall; and never has any name been made known from that day by which souls could be saved, excepting His. By Him all saved souls have entered heaven, from Adam downwards; and without Him none have ever escaped hell.

d. When the world was buried in ignorance

There came a time when the world seemed sunk and buried in ignorance of God. After four thousand years the nations of the earth appeared to have clean forgotten the God that made them. Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires had done nothing but spread superstition and idolatry. Poets, historians, philosophers had proved that, with all their intellectual powers, they had no right knowledge of God, and that man, left to himself, was utterly corrupt. “The world, by wisdom, knew not God” (1Co 1:21). Excepting a few despised Jews in a corner of the earth, the whole world was dead in ignorance and sin. And what did Christ do then?

He left the glory He had had from all eternity with the Father, and came down into the world to provide a salvation. He took our nature upon Him, and was born as a man. As a man He did the will of God perfectly, which we all had left undone; as a man He suffered on the Cross the wrath of God which we ought to have suffered. He brought in everlasting righteousness for us. He redeemed us from the curse of a broken Law. He opened a fountain for all sin and uncleanness. He died for our sins. He rose again for our justification. He ascended to God’s right hand, and there sat down, waiting till His enemies should be made His footstool. And there He sits now, offering salvation to all who will come to Him, interceding for all who believe in Him, and managing by God’s appointment all that concerns the salvation of souls.

e. When sin shall be cast out from this world

There is a time coming when sin shall be cast out from this world. Wickedness shall not always flourish unpunished; Satan shall not always reign; creation shall not always groan, being burdened. There shall be a time of restitution of all things. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Rom 8:22; Act 3:21; 2Pe 3:13; Isa 11:9). And where shall Christ be then? And what shall He do?

Christ Himself shall be King. He shall return to this earth, and make all things new. He shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and the kingdoms of the world shall become His. The heathen shall be given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. His dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Mat 24:30; Rev 11:15; Psa 2:8; Phi 2:10-11; Dan 7:14).

f. When all men shall be judged

There is a day coming when all men shall be judged. The sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them. All that sleep in the grave shall awake and come forth, and all shall be judged according to their works (Rev 20:13; Dan 12:2). And where will Christ be then?

Christ Himself will be the Judge. "The Father...hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "When the Son of man shall come in his glory...then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (Joh 5:22; Mat 25:31-32; 2Co 5:10).

Now, if any reader of this message thinks little of Christ, let him know this day that he is very unlike God! You are of one mind, and God is of another. You are of one judgment, and God is of another. You think it enough to give Christ a little honor, a little reverence, a little respect. But in all the eternal counsels of God the Father, in creation, redemption, restitution, and judgment—in all these, Christ is "all."

Surely we shall do well to consider these things. Surely it is not written in vain, "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him" (Joh 5:23).

2. Christ Is All in the Bible.

In every part of both Testaments, Christ is to be found—dimly and indistinctly at the beginning, more clearly and plainly in the middle, fully and completely at the end, but really and substantially everywhere.

Christ's sacrifice and death for sinners, and Christ's kingdom and future glory, are the light we must bring to bear on any book of Scripture we read. Christ's Cross and Christ's crown are the clues we must hold fast, if we would find our way through Scripture difficulties. Christ is the only key that will unlock many of the dark places of the Word. Some people complain that they do not understand the Bible. And the reason is very simple. They do not use the *key*. To them the Bible is like the hieroglyphics in Egypt. It is a mystery, just because they do not know and employ the key.

a. It was Christ crucified Who was set forth in every Old Testament sacrifice. Every animal slain and offered on an altar was a practical confession that a Saviour was looked for Who would die for sinners—a Saviour Who should take away man's sin, by suffering, as his Substitute and Sin-bearer, in his stead (1Pe 3:18). It is absurd to suppose that an unmeaning slaughter of innocent beasts, without a distinct object in view, could please the eternal God!

b. It was Christ to Whom Abel looked when he offered a better sacrifice than Cain. Not only was the heart of Abel better than that of his brother, but he showed his knowledge of vicarious sacrifice and his faith in an atonement. He offered the firstlings of his flock, with the blood thereof, and in so doing declared his belief that without shedding of blood there is no remission (Heb 11:4).

c. It was Christ of Whom Enoch prophesied in the days of abounding wickedness before the flood. "Behold," he said, "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all" (Jude 14-15).

d. It was Christ to Whom Abraham looked when he dwelt in tents in the land of promise. He believed that in his seed, in one born of his family, all the nations of the earth should be blessed. By faith he saw Christ's day, and was glad (Joh 8:56).

e. It was Christ of Whom Jacob spoke to his sons as he lay dying. He marked out the tribe out of which He would be born, and foretold that "gathering together" unto Him which is yet to be accomplished. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen 49:10).

f. It was Christ Who was the substance of the ceremonial Law which God gave to Israel by the hand of Moses. The morning and evening sacrifice, the continual shedding of blood, the altar, the mercy-seat, the high priest, the passover, the day of atonement, the scapegoat—all these were so many pictures, types, and emblems of Christ and His work. God had compassion upon the weakness of His people. He taught them Christ, line upon line, and, as we teach little children, by similitudes. It was in this sense especially that "the law was a schoolmaster to bring" the Jews "unto Christ" (Gal 3:24).

g. It was Christ to Whom God directed the attention of Israel by all the daily miracles which were done before their eyes in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud and fire which guided them, the manna from heaven which every morning fed them, the water from the smitten rock which followed them—all and each were figures of Christ The brazen serpent, on that memorable occasion when the plague of fiery serpents was sent upon them, was an emblem of Christ (1Co 10:4; Joh 3:14).

h. It was Christ of Whom all the judges were types. Joshua and David and Gideon and Jephthah and Samson, and all the rest whom God raised up to deliver Israel from captivity—all were emblems of Christ. Weak and unstable and faulty as some

of them were, they were set for examples of better things in the distant future. All were meant to remind the tribes of that far higher Deliverer who was yet to come.

i. It was Christ of Whom David the king was a type. Anointed and chosen when few gave him honor, despised and rejected by Saul and all the tribes of Israel, persecuted and obliged to flee for his life, a man of sorrow all his life, and yet at length a conqueror—in all these things David represented Christ.

j. It was Christ of Whom all the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi spoke. They saw through a glass darkly. They sometimes dwelt on His sufferings, and sometimes on His glory that should follow (1Pe 1:11). They did not always mark out for us the distinction between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming. Like two candles in a straight line, one behind the other, they sometimes saw both the advents at the same time, and spoke of them in one breath. They were sometimes moved by the Holy Spirit to write of the times of Christ crucified, and sometimes of Christ's kingdom in the latter days. But Jesus dying, or Jesus reigning, was the thought you will ever find uppermost in their minds.

k. It is Christ, I need hardly say, of Whom the whole New Testament is full. The Gospels are Christ living, speaking and moving among men. The Acts are Christ preached, published, and proclaimed. The Epistles are Christ written of, explained, and exalted. But all through, from first to last, there is one name above every other, and that is the name of Christ.

I charge every reader of this message to ask himself frequently what the Bible is to him. Is it a Bible in which you have found nothing more than good moral precepts and sound advice? Or is it a Bible in which you have found Christ? Is it a Bible in which *Christ is all*? If not, I tell you plainly, you have hitherto used your Bible to very little purpose. You are like a man who studies the solar system, and leaves out in his studies the sun, which is the center of all. It is no wonder if you find your Bible a dull book!

3. Christ Is All in True Religion.

Christ is all in the religion of all true Christians. In saying this, I wish to guard myself against being misunderstood. I hold the absolute necessity of the election of God the Father, and the sanctification of God the Spirit, in order to effect the salvation of everyone that is saved. I hold that there is a perfect harmony and unison in the action of the three Persons of the Trinity, in bringing any man to glory, and that all three cooperate and work a joint work in his deliverance from sin and hell. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit. The Father is merciful; the Son is merciful; the Holy Spirit is merciful. The same Three who said at the beginning, "Let us create," said also, "Let us redeem and save." I hold that everyone who reaches heaven will ascribe all the glory of his salvation to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three Persons in one God.

But, at the same time, I see clear proof in Scripture that it is the mind of the blessed Trinity, that Christ should be prominently and distinctly exalted in the matter of saving souls. Christ is set forth as the Word, through Whom God's love to sinners is made known. Christ's incarnation and atoning death on the Cross are the great corner-stone on which the whole plan of salvation rests. Christ is the way and door, by which alone approaches to God are to be made. Christ is the root into which all elect sinners must be grafted. Christ is the only meeting-place between God and man, between heaven and earth, between the Holy Trinity and the poor sinful child of Adam. It is Christ Whom God the Father has sealed and appointed to convey life to a dead world (Joh 6:27). It is Christ to Whom the Father has given a people to be brought to glory. It is Christ of Whom the Spirit testifies, and to Whom He always leads a soul for pardon and peace. In short, it has "pleased the Father that in Christ all fullness should dwell" (Col 1:19). What the sun is in the firmament of heaven, that Christ is in true Christianity.

I say these things by way of explanation. I want my readers clearly to understand, that in saying "Christ is all," I do *not* mean to shut out the work of the Father and of the Spirit. Now let me show what I do mean.

a. Christ is all a sinner's justification.

Christ is all in a sinner's justification before God. Through Him alone we can have peace with a holy God. By Him alone we can have admission into the presence of the Most High, and stand there without fear. "We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." In Him alone can God be just, and justify the ungodly (Eph 3:12; Rom 3:26).

Wherewith can any mortal man come before God? What can we bring as a plea for acquittal before that glorious Being, in Whose eyes the very heavens are not clean?

Shall we say that we have done our duty to God? Shall we say that we have done our duty to our neighbor? Shall we bring forward our prayers, our regularity, our morality, our amendments, our churchgoing? Shall we ask to be accepted because of any of these?

Which of these things will stand the searching inspection of God's eye? Which of them will actually justify us? Which of them will carry us clear through judgment and land us safe in glory?

None, none, none! Take any commandment of the ten, and let us examine ourselves by it. We have broken it repeatedly. We cannot answer God one of a thousand. Take any of us, and look narrowly into our ways, and we are nothing but sinners. There is but one verdict: we are all guilty, all deserve hell, all ought to die. Wherewith can we come before God?

We must come in the name of Jesus, standing on no other ground, pleading no other plea than this: "Christ died on the Cross for the ungodly, and I trust in Him. Christ died for me, and I believe on Him." The garment of our Elder Brother, the

righteousness of Christ, this is the only robe which can cover us, and enable us to stand in the light of heaven without shame.

The name of Jesus is the only name by which we shall obtain an entrance through the gate of eternal glory. If we come to that gate in our own names, we are lost—we shall not be admitted, we shall knock in vain. If we come in the name of Jesus, it is a passport and shibboleth,² and we shall enter and live.

The mark of the blood of Christ is the only mark that can save us from destruction. When the angels are separating the children of Adam in the last day, if we are not found marked with that atoning blood, we had better never have been born.

Oh, let us never forget that Christ must be all to that soul who would be justified! We must be content to go to heaven as beggars, saved by free grace, simply as believers in Jesus, or we shall never be saved at all.

Is there a thoughtless, worldly soul among the readers of this book? Is there one who thinks to reach heaven by saying hastily at the last, “Lord, have mercy on me,” without Christ? Friend, you are sowing misery for yourself—and unless you alter, you will awake to endless woe.

Is there a proud, formal soul among the readers of this book? Is there anyone thinking to make himself fit for heaven, and good enough to pass muster by his own doings? Brother, you are building a Babel,³ and you will never reach heaven in your present state.

But is there a laboring, heavy-laden one among the readers of this book? Is there one who wants to be saved, and feels a vile sinner? I say to such an one, “Come to Christ, and He shall save you. Come to Christ, and cast the burden of your soul on Him. Fear not; only believe.”

Do you fear wrath? Christ can deliver you from the wrath to come. Do you feel the curse of a broken Law? Christ can redeem you from the curse of the Law. Do you feel far away? Christ has suffered to bring you nigh to God. Do you feel unclean? Christ’s blood can cleanse all sin away. Do you feel imperfect? You shall be complete in Christ. Do you feel as if you were nothing? Christ shall be all in all to your soul. Never did saint reach heaven with any tale but this: “I was washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14).

b. Christ is all his sanctification.

Christ is not only all in the *justification* of a true Christian, but He is also all in his *sanctification*. I would not have anyone misunderstand me. I do not mean for a moment to undervalue the work of the Spirit. But this I say, that no man is ever holy till he comes to Christ and is united to Him. Till then his works are dead works, and he has no holiness at all. First you must be joined to Christ, and then you shall be holy. Without Him, separate from Him, you can do nothing (Joh 15:5).

And no man can grow in holiness except he abides in Christ. Christ is the great root from which every believer must draw his strength to go forward. The Spirit is His special gift, His purchased gift for His people. A believer must not only “receive Christ Jesus the Lord,” but “walk in him, and be rooted and built up in him” (Col 2:6-7).

Would you be holy? Then Christ is the manna you must daily eat, like Israel in the wilderness of old. Would you be holy? Then Christ must be the rock from which you must daily drink the living water. Would you be holy? Then you must be ever looking unto Jesus, looking at His Cross, and learning fresh motives for a closer walk with God—looking at His example and taking Him for your pattern. Looking at Him, you would become like Him. Looking at Him, your face would shine without your knowing it. Look less at yourself and more at Christ, and you will find besetting sins dropping off and leaving you, and your eyes enlightened more and more every day (Heb 12:2; 2Co 3:18).

The true secret of coming up out of the wilderness is to come up leaning on the Beloved (Song 8:5). The true way to be strong is to realize our weakness, and to feel that Christ must be all. The true way to grow in grace is to make use of Christ as a fountain for every minute’s necessities. We ought to employ Him as the prophet’s wife employed the oil—not only to pay our debts, but to live on also. We should strive to be able to say, “The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (2Ki 4:7; Gal 2:20).

I pity those who try to be holy without Christ! Your labor is all in vain. You are putting money in a bag with holes. You are pouring water into a sieve. You are rolling a huge round stone uphill. You are building up a wall with untempered mortar. Believe me, you are beginning at the wrong end. You must come to Christ first, and He shall give you His sanctifying Spirit. You must learn to say with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi 4:13).

c. Christ is all his comfort in time present.

Christ is not only all in the sanctification of a true Christian, but all in his comfort in time present. A saved soul has many sorrows. He has a body like other men, weak and frail. He has a heart like other men, and often a more sensitive one too. He has trials and losses to bear like others, and often more. He has his share of bereavements, deaths, disappointments, crosses. He has the world to oppose, a place in life to fill blamelessly, unconverted relatives to bear with patiently, persecutions to endure, and a death to die.

² **shibboleth** – the Hebrew word for river or ear of corn. It was cleverly used by the Gileadites to detect invaders from east of the Jordan, who could not pronounce the word without a revealing incorrect accent (Jdg 12:1-6).

³ **Babel** – the tower built by proud men after the Flood, upon which they hoped to reach to heaven. It was brought to nothing by God when He confounded their languages (Gen 11:1-9).

And who is sufficient for these things? What shall enable a believer to bear all this? Nothing but the consolation there is in Christ (Phi 2:1).

Jesus is indeed the Brother born for adversity. He is the Friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and He alone can comfort His people. He can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, for He suffered Himself (Heb 4:15). He knows what sorrow is, for He was a Man of sorrows. He knows what an aching body is, for His body was racked with pain. He cried, "All my bones are out of joint" (Psa 22:14). He knows what poverty and weariness are, for He was often wearied and had not where to lay His head. He knows what family unkindness is, for even His brethren did not believe Him. He had no honor in His own house.

And Jesus knows exactly how to comfort His afflicted people. He knows how to pour in oil and wine into the wounds of the spirit, how to fill up gaps in empty hearts, how to speak a word in season to the weary, how to heal the broken heart, how to make all our bed in sickness, how to draw nigh when we are faint, and say, "Fear not I am thy salvation" (Lam 3:57).

We talk of sympathy being pleasant. There is no sympathy like that of Christ. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. He knows our sorrows. In all our pain He is pained, and like the good physician, He will not measure out to us one drop of sorrow too much. David once said, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul" (Psa 94:19). Many a believer, I am sure, could say as much: If the Lord Himself had not stood by me, the deep waters would have "gone over my soul" (Psa 124:5).

How a believer gets through all his troubles appears wonderful. How he is carried through the fire and water he passes through, seems past comprehension. But the true account of it is just this, that Christ is not only justification and sanctification, but consolation also.

Oh, you who want unfailling comfort, I commend you to Christ! In Him alone there is no failure. Rich men are disappointed in their treasures. Learned men are disappointed in their books. Husbands are disappointed in their wives. Wives are disappointed in their husbands. Parents are disappointed in their children. Statesmen are disappointed when, after many a struggle, they attain place and power. They find out, to their cost, that it is more pain than pleasure, that it is disappointment, annoyance, incessant trouble, worry, vanity, and vexation of spirit. But no man was ever disappointed in Christ.

d. Christ is all his hopes for time to come.

But as Christ is all in the comforts of a true Christian in time present, so Christ is all in his hopes for time to come. Few men and women, I suppose, are to be found who do not indulge in hopes of some kind about their souls. But the hopes of the vast majority are nothing but vain fancies. They are built on no solid foundation. No living man but the real child of God—the sincere, thorough-going Christian—can give a reasonable account of the hope that is in him. No hope is reasonable which is not Scriptural.

A true Christian has a good hope when he looks forward; the worldly man has none. A true Christian sees light in the distance; the worldly man sees nothing but darkness. And what is the hope of a true Christian? It is just this: that Jesus Christ is coming again, coming without sin, coming with all His people, coming to wipe away every tear, coming to raise His sleeping saints from the grave, coming to gather together all His family—that they may be forever with Him.

Why is a believer patient? Because he looks for the coming of the Lord. He can bear hard things without murmuring. He knows the time is short. He waits quietly for the King.

Why is he moderate in all things? Because he expects his Lord soon to return. His treasure is in heaven; his good things are yet to come. The world is not his rest, but an inn; and an inn is not home. He knows that "He that shall come will soon come, and will not tarry." Christ is coming, and that is enough (Heb 10:37).

This is indeed a "blessed hope" (Ti 2:13)! Now is the school-time, then the eternal holiday. Now is the tossing on the waves of a troublesome world, then the quiet harbor. Now is the scattering, then the gathering. Now is the time of sowing, then the harvest. Now is the working season, then the wages. Now is the cross, then the crown.

People talk of their "expectations" and hopes from this world. None have such solid expectations as a saved soul. He can say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; my expectation is from him" (Psa 62:5).

In all true saving religion, Christ is all in justification, all in sanctification, all in comfort, all in hope. Blessed is that mother's child that knows it, and far more blessed is he that feels it, too. Oh, that men would prove themselves, and see what they know of it for their own souls!

4. Christ Will Be All in Heaven.

I cannot dwell long on this point. I have not power [even] if I had space and room. I can ill describe things unseen and a world unknown. But this I know, that all men and women who reach heaven will find that even there also Christ is all.

Like the altar in Solomon's temple, Christ crucified will be the grand object in heaven. That altar struck the eye of everyone who entered the temple gates. It was a great brazen altar, twenty cubits broad, as broad as the front of the temple itself (2Ch 3:4; 4:1). So in like manner will Jesus fill the eyes of all who enter glory. In the midst of the throne, and surrounded by adoring angels and saints, there will be "the Lamb that was slain." And "the Lamb [shall be] the light" of the place" (Rev 5:6; 21:23).

The *praise* of the Lord Jesus, will be the eternal song of all the inhabitants of heaven. They will say with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slainBlessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev 5:12-13).

The *service* of the Lord Jesus will be one eternal occupation of all the inhabitants of heaven. We shall “serve him day and night in his temple” (Rev 7:15). Blessed is the thought that we shall at length attend on Him without distraction, and work for Him without weariness.

The *presence* of Christ Himself shall be one everlasting enjoyment of the inhabitants of heaven. We shall see His face, and hear His voice, and speak with Him as friend with friend (Rev 22:4). Sweet is the thought that whosoever may be wanting⁴ at the marriage supper, the Master Himself will be there. His presence will satisfy all our wants (Psa 17:15).

What a sweet and glorious home heaven will be to those who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity! Here we live by faith in Him, and find peace, though we see Him not. There we shall see Him face to face, and find He is altogether lovely. “Better [indeed will be] the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire!” (Ecc 6:9.)

But alas, how little fit for heaven are many who talk of going to heaven, when they die while they manifestly have no saving faith and no real acquaintance with Christ. You give Christ no honor here. You have no communion with Him. You do not love Him. Alas, what could you do in heaven? It would be no place for you. Its joys would be no joys for you. Its happiness would be a happiness into which you could not enter. Its employments would be a weariness and a burden to your heart. Oh, repent and change before it be too late!

I trust I have now shown how deep are the foundations of that little expression, “Christ is all.”

I might easily add to the things I have said, if space permitted. The subject is not exhausted. I have barely walked over the surface of it. There are mines of precious truth connected with it, which I have left unopened.

I might show how Christ ought to be all in a visible church. Religious buildings, numerous religious services, gorgeous ceremonies, troops of ordained men—all, *all* are nothing in the sight of God, if the Lord Jesus Himself in all His offices is not honored, magnified and exalted. That church is but a dead carcass in which Christ is not all.

I might show how Christ ought to be all in a ministry. The great work which ordained men are intended to do is to lift up Christ. We are to be like the pole on which the brazen serpent was hung. We are useful so long as we exalt the great object of faith, but useful no further. We are to be ambassadors to carry tidings to a rebellious world about the King’s Son, and if we teach men to think more about us and our office than about Him, we are not fit for our place. The Spirit will never honor that minister who does not testify of Christ, who does not make Christ all.

I might show how language seems exhausted in the Bible, in describing Christ’s various offices. I might describe how figures seem endless, which are employed in unfolding Christ’s fullness. The High Priest, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Saviour, the Advocate, the Shepherd, the Physician, the Bridegroom, the Head, the Bread of Life, the Light of the world, the Way, the Door, the Vine, the Rock, the Fountain, the Sun of Righteousness, the Forerunner, the Surety, the Captain, the Prince of life, the Amen, the Almighty, the Author and Finisher of faith, the Lamb of God, the King of saints, the Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Counselor, the Bishop of souls—all these, and many more, are names given to Christ in Scripture. Each is a fountain of instruction and comfort for everyone who is willing to drink of it. Each supplies matter for useful meditation.

But I trust I have said enough to throw light on the point I want to impress on the minds of all who read this message. I trust I have said enough to show the immense importance of the practical conclusions with which I now desire to finish the subject.

5. Practical Conclusions

a. Learn the uselessness of Christless religion.

Is Christ all? Then let us learn the utter uselessness of a Christless religion. There are only too many baptized men and women who practically know nothing at all about Christ. Their religion consists in a few vague notions and empty expressions. They “trust they are no worse than others.” They “keep to their church.” They “try to do their duty.” They “do nobody any harm.” They “hope God will be merciful to them.” They “trust the Almighty will pardon their sins, and take them to heaven when they die.” This is about the whole of their religion!

But what do these people know practically about Christ? Nothing, nothing at all! What experimental acquaintance have they with His offices and work, His blood, His righteousness, His mediation, His priesthood, His intercession? None, none at all! Ask them about a saving faith, ask them about being born again of the Spirit, ask them about being sanctified in Christ Jesus. What answer will you get? You are a barbarian to them. You have asked them simple Bible questions. But they know no more about them experimentally than a Buddhist or a Turk. And yet this is the religion of hundreds and thousands of people who are called Christians all over the world!

If any reader of this message is a man of this kind, I warn him plainly that such Christianity will never take him to heaven. It may do very well in the eye of man. It may pass muster⁵ very decently at the vestry meeting, in the place of busi-

⁴ wanting – lacking something; having a need.

ness, in the House of Commons, or in the streets. But it will never comfort you. It will never satisfy your conscience. It will never save your soul.

I warn you plainly that all notions and theories about God being merciful without Christ, and excepting through Christ, are baseless delusions and empty fancies. Such theories are as purely an idol of man's invention as the idol of Juggernaut.⁶ They are all of the earth, earthy. They never came down from heaven. The God of heaven has sealed and appointed Christ as the one only Saviour and way of life, and all who would be saved must be content to be saved by Him, or they will never be saved at all.

Let every reader take notice. I give you fair warning this day. A religion without Christ will never save your soul.

b. Learn the folly of joining anything with Christ in salvation.

Let me say another thing: Is Christ all? Then learn the enormous folly of joining anything with Christ in the matter of salvation. There are multitudes of baptized men and women who profess to honor Christ, but in reality do Him great dishonor. They give Christ a certain place in their system of religion, but not the place which God intended Him to fill. Christ alone is not all in all to their souls. No! It is either Christ and the church, or Christ and the sacraments, or Christ and His ordained ministers, or Christ and their own repentance, or Christ and their own goodness, or Christ and their own prayers, or Christ and their own sincerity and charity, on which they practically rest their souls.

If any reader of this message is a "Christian" of this kind, I warn him also plainly, that his religion is an offense to God. You are changing God's plan of salvation into a plan of your own devising. You are in effect deposing Christ from His throne, by giving the glory due to Him to another.

I care not who it is that teaches such religion, and on whose word you build. Whether he be pope or cardinal, archbishop or bishop, dean or archdeacon, presbyter or deacon, Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent, Wesleyan or Plymouth brother—whosoever adds anything to Christ, teaches you wrong.

I care not what it is that you add to Christ. Whether it be the necessity of joining the church of Rome, or of being an Episcopalian, or of becoming a free churchman, or of giving up the liturgy, or of being dipped—whatever you may practically add to Christ in the matter of salvation, you do Christ an injury.

Take heed what you are doing. Beware of giving to Christ's servants the honor due to none but Christ. Beware of giving the Lord's ordinances the honor due unto the Lord. Beware of resting the burden of your soul on anything but Christ, and Christ alone.

c. Let all who want to be saved apply directly to Christ.

Let me say another thing. Is Christ all? Then let all who want to be saved, apply directly to Christ. There are many who hear of Christ with the ear and believe all they are told about Him. They allow that there is no salvation excepting in Christ. They acknowledge that Jesus alone can deliver them from hell, and present them faultless before God.

But they seem never to get beyond this general acknowledgment. They never fairly lay hold on Christ for their own souls. They stick fast in a state of wishing and wanting and feeling and intending, and never get any further. They see what we mean; they know it is all true. They hope one day to get the full benefit of it, but at present they get no benefit whatever. The world is their all. Politics are their all. Pleasure is their all. Business is their all. But Christ is not their all.

If any reader of this message is a man of this kind, I warn him also plainly: he is in a bad state of soul. You are as truly in the way to hell in your present condition, as Judas Iscariot or Ahab or Cain. Believe me, there must be actual faith in Christ, or else Christ died in vain, so far as you are concerned. It is not *looking* at the bread that feeds the hungry man, but the actual *eating* of it. It is not gazing on the lifeboat that saves the shipwrecked sailor, but the actual getting into it. It is not knowing and believing that Christ is a Saviour that can save your soul, unless there are actual transactions between you and Christ. You must be able to say, "Christ is My Saviour, because I have come to Him by faith, and taken Him for my own." "Much of religion," said Luther, "turns on being able to use possessive pronouns. Take from me the word 'my,' and you take from me God!"

Hear the advice I give you this day, and act upon it at once. Stand still no longer, waiting for some imaginary frames and feelings, which will never come. Hesitate no longer under the idea that you must first of all obtain the Spirit, and then come to Christ. Arise and come to Christ just as you are. He waits for you, and is as willing to save as He is mighty. He is the appointed Physician for sin-sick souls. Deal with Him as you would with your doctor about the cure of a disease of your body. Make a direct application to Him and tell Him all your wants. Take with you words this day, and cry mightily to the Lord Jesus for pardon and peace, as the thief did on the cross. Do as that man did, cry "Lord, remember me" (Luk 23:42). Tell Him you have heard that He receives sinners, and that you are such. Tell Him you want to be saved, and ask Him to save you. Rest not till you have actually tasted for yourself that the Lord is gracious. Do this, and you shall find, sooner or later, if you are really in earnest, that Christ is all.

⁵ **pass muster** – pass inspection of a soldier's uniform and weapon at a military formation.

⁶ **Juggernaut** – a Hindu god which created the world. Zealous followers would throw themselves under its cart when passing in a parade, and be crushed to death.

d. Let us deal with Christ as if we believe He is all.

One more thing let me add. Is Christ all? Then let all His converted people deal with Him as if they really believed it. Let them lean on Him and trust Him far more than they have ever done yet. Alas, there are many of the Lord's people who live far below their privileges! There are many truly Christian souls who rob themselves of their own peace and forsake their own mercies. There are many who insensibly join their own faith, or the work of the Spirit in their own hearts, to Christ, and so miss the fullness of Gospel peace. There are many who make little progress in their pursuit of holiness and shine with a very dim light. And why is all this? Simply because in nineteen cases out of twenty, men do not make Christ all in all.

Now I call on every reader of this message who is a believer, I beseech him for his own sake, to make sure that Christ is really and thoroughly his all in all. Beware of allowing yourself to mingle anything of your own with Christ.

Have you faith? It is a priceless blessing. Happy indeed are they who are willing and ready to trust Jesus. But take heed you do not make a "Christ" of your faith. Rest not on your own faith, but on Christ.

Is the work of the Spirit in your soul? Thank God for it. It is a work that shall never be overthrown. But oh, beware lest, unawares to yourself, you make a Christ of the work of the Spirit! Rest not on the work of the Spirit, but on Christ.

Have you any inward feelings of religion, and experience of grace? Thank God for it. Thousands have no more religious feeling than a cat or dog. But oh, beware lest you make a Christ of your feelings and sensations! They are poor, uncertain things, and sadly dependent on our bodies and outward circumstances. Rest not a grain of weight on your feelings. Rest only on Christ.

Learn, I entreat you, to look more and more at the great object of faith, Jesus Christ, and to keep your mind dwelling on Him. So doing you would find faith and all the other graces grow, though the growth at the time might be imperceptible to yourself. He that would prove a skillful archer must look not at the arrow, but at the mark.

Alas, I fear there is a great piece of pride and unbelief still sticking in the hearts of many believers! Few seem to realize how much they need a Saviour. Few seem to understand how thoroughly they are indebted to Him. Few seem to comprehend how much they need Him every day. Few seem to feel how simply and like a child they ought to hang their souls on Him. Few seem to be aware how full of love He is to His poor, weak people, and how ready to help them! And few therefore seem to know the peace and joy and strength and power to live a godly life, which is to be had in Christ.

Change your plan, reader, if your conscience tells you that you are guilty; change your plan, and learn to trust Christ more. Physicians love to see patients coming to consult them; it is their office to receive the sickly, and if possible to effect cures. The advocate loves to be employed; it is his calling. The husband loves his wife to trust him and lean upon him; it is his delight to cherish her and promote her comfort. And Christ loves His people to lean on Him, to rest in Him, to call on Him, to abide in Him.

Let us all learn and strive to do so more and more. Let us live *on* Christ. Let us live *in* Christ. Let us live *with* Christ. Let us live *to* Christ. So doing, we shall prove that we fully realize that *Christ is all*. So doing, we shall feel great peace, and attain more of that holiness—"without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14).

