

Christ All in All

**Preached At Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Lord's day
evening March 26th, 1922**

by J. K. POPHAM

"Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." (Colossians 3:11)

It is to be much observed that in a chapter of exhortation this great and all-comprehensive statement of doctrine should be made. It is to be observed that the Holy Ghost is here teaching a mystery, a mercy, an all-centring truth, a truth which as made known by the Spirit enables the Lord's people to walk in the exhortations, which precede and follow it. Sovereign grace will always appear shining in the church to the praise and glory of God, and as opened and applied by the Spirit will keep the Lord's people from legalizing exhortations, from bringing in duty-faith in order to please God and obtain mercy. You will never by grace disregard precepts and admonitions; you will never wish them out of the Bible; you will never excuse yourself in any act of disobedience on the ground of your weakness. You will never think that the Lord is too particular in so writing as to regulate your life according to His revealed will, and when you find in your hearts the riches of the truth of the text, then you will find what one has said to be true: "God's biddings are gracious enablings." Then you will pray: "Give strength and will, and then command, and we will follow Thee." The text is very wonderful. It excludes from the new creature all kinds of distinctions Jew, Greek, circumcision, uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, and free. Distinctions among men are abolished in the new creature. High and low, rich and poor, The same Holy Spirit who wrote these words by Paul, wrote also by the same man to the Romans and said that there is no difference between Jew and Greek, for "the same Lord is over all and is rich unto all them that call upon him." (Rom. 10:12) This is a great mercy, God is no respecter of persons. We must ever maintain, I believe the church of God will ever maintain, those natural and proper distinctions which God in His providence makes as between high and low, rich and poor, and so on, master and servant; but in Christ they do not hold. The doctrine of the text is this, that in the child of God who has been born again and has put on the new man, received Christ by revelation, is brought into union with Christ, there is but one centre, one fullness, one life, one hope, and he finds all that to be in Christ Jesus. "Christ is all and in all."

I shall take it in the first place in this respect He is all and in all to His Father: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." All the grace God will give to the church, He gave first of all to Christ, as Paul says to Timothy, "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9) All in respect of fulfilling the law. He is "the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 10:4) He fulfilled it. He came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it, (Matt. 5:17) magnify it and make it honourable. (Isa. 42:21) He is all as a Foundation: "Behold I have laid in Zion a foundation stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone." (Isa. 28:16) None will ever have grace but from Christ. None will ever be delivered

from the law but by the death of Christ. None will ever stand well for eternity, but as built on the Foundation that God has laid in Zion: "To whom coming as lively stones," ye are built on a living stone, that is Jesus Christ. He has all life. "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath given the Son to have life in himself, and he will give it to whomsoever he will." (John 5:26) The life, the spiritual life, which animates Zion is in its fullness in Christ. He is all light, the light that is to lighten all the world, I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me should not abide in darkness." (John 12:46) He is all power. He is the Strength of Israel. He is the power of God. All power to rule is given unto Him, in heaven and in earth. He is all bread: "I am the bread of life." Whatever nourishes your faith comes from Christ, is part of Christ. You will always languish and faint and fall, unless nourished up by that precious Bread of life which Jesus Christ is. He is all rest. The Father rests in Him, the church rests in Him: "This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell; for I have desired it." (Ps. 132:14) Rest, who does not value it? What is rest to a labouring man? It is sweet; so is Christ sweet as the rest to His weary people. He is all comfort. He is the God of comfort: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you, and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem, saith the Lord." (Isa. 66:13) He is all peace. He is the God of peace, the Prince of peace, and by His cross He made peace. No real peace apart from Christ can ever be known.

He is all sweetness. Sweetness left us, sweetness was banished from the earth by the Fall. God drove out the man from Eden when he had sinned, and now labour and sweat o brow and pain are the best for the most part. O Christ is sweetness! Light is sweet, mercy is sweet, pardon is sweet, the favour of God is sweet, the word of God is sweet to the taste of all to whom it is given.

He is all glory. The glory of God was given to Christ for the church: "And the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them." (John 17:22) So to the Father, Christ is all. The sufficiency of love, the fullness of love, the sufficiency of all goodness, the fullness of goodness, Jesus Christ is to the Father; and if a poor sinner is led by the Holy Spirit to pray, this will be what, as it were, the Father will say to him: "Go to my Son, I am pleased in Him." It pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in Him." (Col. 1:19)

Now let us pause here and ask ourselves a question that is vital, namely: Does this fullness which the Father is pleased should dwell in His Son, please us, or would we prefer a stock of our own? Let conscience answer the question.

In the next place, Christ is all to His people, all in them, and this we must notice in a few particulars, as:

First, He is all life: "I am the life," is His own testimony. John had shown to him, as he informs us at the end of the Revelation, "a pure river of water of life clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb," (Rev. 22:1) and if that life is given to us we find what the Psalmist found, namely, "no man can keep alive his own soul." Everyone blessed with this divine life finds that it must be sustained, replenished as it were, renovated, and who can do this but He who is that life in its fullness, from whom it flows into the soul? "I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish." (John 10:28) Conscience may lash us, but it cannot replenish a languishing life. Conscience may be God's word and minister to you, telling you of your faults

and your follies and your destitution. It may point out, but it will never supply you. Christ must give you new life. Hart has well expressed it: "He to the feeble and the faint, His mighty aid makes known; and when their languid life is spent, supplies it with His own." This life is very beautiful, it is pure, a pure river of life. Hence all the holy desires of the people of God, all their wishes to be freed from sin, all their grief for sin. A pure life must grieve over a bad life. It is as if two lives are in each child of God. One from beneath, the other from above. Bless God, "the elder has the upper hand, that the elder prevails. The damping of desire, the choking of prayer, the aversion for good, the desire for the world, and the disinclination to forsake the world to take up the cross. O this death! Deathly feelings, deathly formal prayers, formal reading of the Scriptures, the formal hearing of the word, everything formal and deathly. These things come from self, they are death, they are nothing better; and that is the best that can come from you, from anyone. Now the opposite is this an aspiring life and the object of the aspiration is God. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." (Ps. 42:1) "O when wilt Thou come unto me and bless me?" We want this feeble life strengthened, languishing life to be replenished; we want the supplies that Christ alone can afford and give. He is all this. All holy desires, all gracious feelings, all hunger for God, all thirst for righteousness, all longing to be at the throne of grace, all exercises there, all prayers that go from the heart and ascend and reach the ear of the Lord of Sabaoth all these come from life. The Spirit of life in Christ gives liberty from sin and death. The Spirit of life goes up to heaven. What comes from heaven goes back to heaven. As the rain that comes from heaven in the form of fruit, so the life that comes from Christ into the soul returns to Him in the form of faith and hope and love and prayer and obedience and humility. So He is all life. Do you not feel revived at times? Is it not very blessed to feel, from being in the most languid, carnal, deathly condition, an up-springing to your great surprise, of new feelings and life and energy in prayer, confession of sin, and asking the Lord that He would keep you from sinking back into that condition? Do you not put up, so to speak, the petition of Jeremiah, who when he was brought out of the house of prison, besought the King not to let him go back there; and you, brought out of a bad state, say sometimes, "Lord, do keep me from sinking back again." This then is the first thing to notice. He is all life in the church. She is the fullness of Christ, the relative fullness. His life is hers.

Secondly, He is all light. Light discovers darkness, light that shows us our deformity in sin, light that makes us understand there are dangers everywhere, light that acts upon Scripture and brings a Scripture unto our heart, making that known that is written: "The entrance of thy words giveth light, it giveth understanding unto the simple." (Ps. 119:130) How is it that we read the Bible and understand so little of it? How is it that some of you, if you do read the Bible at all put it down an uninteresting uninforming book? I tell you that it is an inspired Book, and you may not consciously dispute what I say. I tell you it is God's Word, God's own Word inspired by the Spirit. I tell you that it describes your case, and you may not dispute what I say, "I do not understand it." Now let me tell you the reason. Your eyes are closed, your eyes are closed. "The entrance of thy words giveth light, it (that is the entrance) giveth understanding to the simple." That was why the Psalmist could say he had more knowledge than the ancients, he understood more than his teachers, because the word entered. O what a blessed light is Scripture when thus entering! "Truly," said Solomon, "the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." That is so naturally. We all love the light, and the older I get the more I live daylight and the sun. Now when God's word comes in, it is a beautiful light. It shows God, who He is, what He is, how holy, how glorious, how gracious, how tender, how compassionate, how

wise, how full! It shows a sinner how bad, wicked, deformed, helpless, and dead he is! It reveals Christ, how good and full He is! It makes Him attractive, it shines on the road that leads to life. It opens the way wherein no lion nor any ravenous beast shall be found. And it sometimes is used by the Lord to shine upon the path wherein you are walking. It may be a path full of trouble. Still the light comes, and you say "This is the way." Christ is all this: "I am come a light into the world." The light of life, the true light, that lighteth every man born in the church of Christ. He has come to be this. Christ is all light.

He is all mercy, all mercy. If we are the Lord's people we are exhorted to come boldly to the throne of grace. What is that throne of grace? It is no other, no one else than the very Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is in Him. God has set Him up as that glorious One; "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary." (Jer. 17:12) Christ is that sanctuary called "a little sanctuary in the countries;" (Ezek. 11:16) and it is a great thing to see this, for mercy is the total sum of our need. Mercy alone can cover us, mercy alone can supply us and support us and help us and teach us and comfort us, and Christ is all this. What a wonder it is to find the fullness of mercy, and some of it flowing into your heart and soul, flowing so that you say, "Why, this melts my heart!" "Dissolved by thy mercy, I fall to the ground." And surely every child of God wants to know that and feel it.

He is all righteousness. And here let me bring in this, that a newborn soul is created after the image of Him that created Him, and the image of God is righteousness; that is, here he is righteous. And if you are born of God you are. There are two words to be said about this. First, there is righteousness imputed, and this makes the person beautiful in God's sight, because it makes him just. Sinner, this must be your title. This is your title to bliss. This must be your perfection, and if you have any desire after Christ, may I say this to you. Do entreat the Lord to reveal in you the righteousness of Christ, for true salvation, vital godliness, is more than a matter of idea. There must be this, shall I say this substitutionary thing, perfect righteousness, and this is Christ. Hence the name that is given Him: "This is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." (Jer. 23:6) If you want thorns in your dying pillow, live carelessly, live as your natural mind dictates, be careless of your profession. If you want comfort and peace on your dying bed, beg of God to reveal in you Jesus Christ as your righteousness, and if you get that revelation it will make you very careful about your walk. You will want to please Him who has made you acceptable to Himself, made you beautiful even as He Himself is. "For as he is, so are we in this world." This is His righteousness; this is the sinner's righteousness, this is His beauty. All in all. No thread of human goodness will ever be added to this. Not a single deed that a child of God does, however holy, will ever be added to this righteousness. By the help of God, I will shut the creature out as much as I can; yea, the Scripture does it. He is all righteousness. Here is our plea, here is our title, here is our beauty, here is our comfort.

So in the next place, He is all the holiness of His people. Pure affections come from Him, holy feelings come from Him. I do not mean sentiment, but I mean true holiness in your heart that makes you hate sin, that makes Christ precious, that makes obedience a delight, that makes you long to be where He is, where there is no sin. It is not a notion floating in the mind that is naturally religious, but a true, solemn, sacred wish to be like the Lord; and it is part of likeness to Him. It is an abhorrence of evil, it is a cleaving to goodness, it is a following Christ, it is a leaving the world. saving yourself from this evil generation. It is being clean: "Be ye clean that

bear the vessels of the Lord," (Isa. 52:11) and it proceeds from this: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." (Ezek. 36:25) This is Christ, a pure river of holiness as all life comes from Him. O what a wonder it is to be longing to be godly in the midst of your feelings of being ungodly!

Next, Christ is all rest, all rest. Rest is beautiful, sweet. You may rest in the bosom of your family, find delight there and say, my best place is my home; and it is one of God's greatest gifts, natural gifts. It is one of the best parts of our wicked nature. There is a home in which a man rests, and when he has done his day's work and business and gets home to his family, he is not anxious to go out and find company elsewhere. He says, "I have enough here, this is my rest, I want nothing better than this in this world." Now take this spiritually. What a rest is Christ! "We which have believed do enter into rest," (Heb. 4:3) and this means much. It means many things, I can only name one or two.

It is a rest with respect to working. Rest is relative. God rested from His works when He had made all, and had seen all that He had made was good and was pleased therewith. Then He rested from His labor and His work on the Sabbath day. The seventh day was called the Sabbath because it was the rest. Now if you enter into Christ as yours by the Holy Ghost, you cease from your own works, you do not work to please God. You do not work to obtain life; you work because you have life, but you rest in respect of the Lord's great salvation. It is in your heart. That is one wonderful part of rest, that you have nothing to do to make yourself acceptable to God, nothing to do to render yourself pleasing to the divine Majesty. You understand those of you who have had it, what a perfect rest it is to the mind. What a ground for the soul! What a bed from the creature! Salvation, salvation wrought out, salvation revealed, salvation brought nigh, brought home by the mighty power of the eternal Spirit. That is rest.

Then you come to trouble. You are in the wilderness, you have affliction, and then is said: "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him," and when you are enabled to that, to leave yourself, your circumstances, men, things, want, everything that may have pressed upon you, leave all with the Lord; commit all into His keeping and feel in your soul, now His will is my delight, His dispensation with me is the choice of my soul, you have real rest. And this I will say and I know no child of God who has had the experience will contradict me I will say this, that five minutes of this rest will give you an impression of the goodness of God that no endowment, and no preaching, no reading can ever lodge in your mind and understanding. O it is so pure, it is so heavenly, it is so blessed! "Rest in the Lord," in His holy will, in His divine dispensations, in the afflictive dispensations; rest in Him, wait patiently for Him to come and work what deliverance you need, what deliverance it may please Him to grant. Who is all this? Christ is all and in all. The good will of Him that dwelt in the bush is here. The design of God for your good is here. The foundation that you shall be a partaker of His holiness lodges here, the end is here, that you may be brought in God's time into the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Christ is all and in all here, and beloved friends, He is all the power of God in His church. Says Paul to the Romans: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." (Rom. 1:16) This then brings it into experience. That is not a mere statement, not a laying down of a doctrine, it is a real bringing the doctrine of the gospel

into experience: "The power of God to everyone that believeth." And what a power it is to overcome unbelief, to scatter the darkness and confusion of our minds, to do away with sin and guilt from the conscience, and to fill an empty heart with a revealed Christ, and to make the sinner know that he is accepted in the Beloved, and that all that is necessary for His appearing before the Most High in glory, he receives from Jesus Christ. My beloved friends, this power of God is wonderful in the heart, it subdues sin. If ever you get the foot of your faith on the pride of your nature, you will say the power was God's. "The foot shall tread it down," that is, "the lofty city." "He layeth it low, even to the ground. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor and the steps of the needy." If ever you say in heart, "Be gone unbelief, my Saviour is near," it is the power of God in you. If ever you can say in your heart, "This God is my God for ever and ever and will be my guide even unto death," that is the power of God. When you walk at liberty, when you walk up and down in the name of the Lord, when you feel happy in the Lord, when all disputes are ended in forgiveness, when all controversies are drowned in the blood of Christ, when your will is brought into unison with the will of God, the power that accomplished these things in the power of Christ, the power of that blessed One who is said to be the power of God. Therefore no distinctions of human nature among men can have any effect at all here. They are just as if they did not exist, so truly, so absolutely, is the whole work in the regenerate person the work of God, that a man must say: "Now I had nothing to do with it. I was passive, when Christ first came; I have been passive every time mercy has come anew to me. I have not been left passive. Ah, mercy has made me move, but I was passive in the reception continually, so that my nature was subdued. I am a vessel, and mercy was poured in; and so let me say in conclusion, this being the case, on whose head must the crown be put, who shall bear the glory? Why, the Lord Himself.

Therefore we find the song that is in the church triumphant in heaven, is also in the church militant on earth. It is one song sung in different manners. In heaven perfectly: "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." (Rev. 1:5,6) And what have we sung some of us, what have we sung in our hearts when our lips have not moved, when we have been prostrated before the Lord, when our hearts have swelled, when we felt we could do no other than praise Him, and our hearts have been tuned, and we have sung a song. What has it been? Just the same: "Unto him that loved us." Just the same: "Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding, Ransomed souls the tidings swell, 'Tis a deep that knows no sounding, Who its breadth or length can tell? On its glories let my soul for ever dwell." The song flows to Him. Christ is all and in all, permeating all; His name pervades, it is pervasive; His blood penetrates, His righteousness covers, His grace subdues, His peace conquers, His rest is delightful in every respect. It is thus then that the creature is nothing but a receiver, passive in the reception. The creature has here no distinctions, neither rich nor poor, neither learned nor ignorant, neither strong nor weak, neither good nor bad. Privileges help not, and no lack of privileges can be any bar because from first to last He is "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord Almighty."

Well my brethren, let us try by the help of God, notwithstanding that we are so low, many of us, and have so little grace, to praise the Lord for His great goodness to us. Let us bring the sacrifice of praise, even the fruit of our lips, to Him who has been so boundless in His goodness over what we have thought and felt to be our boundless guilt, our dreadful sins.

May the Lord bless you, bless His truth, and give this sweet sacred foundation to each one, that Christ now would bring His love, His goodness, His mercy, His atonement, that Christ in His grace is all in all. Amen.