

## *The Apostle's Choice.*

No. II.

*"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."*—PHILIPPIANS iii. 8.<sup>1</sup>



HOW like, beloved in our Lord, that the apostle is meeting with a doubt here, in the eighth verse of this chapter, which might seem to rise from that which he has said in the seventh verse thereof. And does the apostle count all his former gain to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus? even all these fair and great privileges that are in so great request among men, and the men who were of his profession they thought no little thing of their<sup>2</sup> privileges, to be of the seed of Israel, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, come of the royal and kingly tribe, to be for profession a Pharisee, for zeal a persecutor of the Church, touching the righteousness that is of the law blameless. It might have been said to Paul, "Paul, think ye nothing of all these?" The apostle answers to these, ver. 8, and says, "I will eat nothing in of that which I have said, but confirms

<sup>1</sup> In MS., "Afternoon for thanksgiving."

<sup>2</sup> These.

it." "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. Yea, also, I count them to be but dung. I count them not worthy the least of my love to take any of it from Him."

The *first* thing we learn here is, Labour once to win in a way of commendation of Christ, and then His praise shall grow among your hands. Speak once good of Christ into your heart, and ye will not win soon off that text again. The more that you think of Christ, the more will that matter grow among your hands. The more you enter upon thinking of Christ's fulness, the more will you love it. Paul, the longer he speaks of Christ, the higher he grows in estimation of Him, for he said before, "I count all things loss for Christ," but now, "I count them dung for Him, that I may gain Him." Learn to be content to lose all things that ye may get Christ, and if you do so, indeed, you may be sure you shall get Him. You will see this to be true also Cant. v. When there is a question moved to the Church, the spouse of Christ, "What is her beloved," say they, "more than another beloved?" Compare verse sixth with the sixteenth, and ye will see the answer to be clearly this way. In verse sixth, she answers: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand, His head is as the most fine gold, His locks are bushy and black like a raven, His eyes are as the eyes of doves, His cheeks are as a bed of spices," &c. And then, having described Him in all His parts in the sixteenth verse, she says of Him: "He is altogether lovely," and, "therefore wonder not," would she say,

“that I make so meikle<sup>1</sup> din for my beloved, for there is nothing in Him, but that which is most desired.” And Psa. lxxiii. 24: “Thou wilt guide me with Thy cōunsel, and afterwards receive me to glory.” But he goes higher in the next verse: “Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and I desire none in earth beside Thee;” and so still ascends. Isa. xl. 7, the prophet, speaking of the Lord’s greatness and majesty, says, “All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted unto Him to be less than nothing and vanity.” So that whoever they be who take themselves to speak of God, or of Christ, in their excellency and glory, if they think rightly of it, they will be dipped over head and ears in it. No created paper and ink are able to describe the Lord as He is. Aye, His word tells not all to us what He is. It is not possible for us to get a copy of Him. Set a thousand worlds of poets to make songs of Christ they could not say the thousandth part of the thing that is true of Him.

*Use First:* This serves to teach all the ministers of Christ this common place of preaching. Above all things learn this, to put our Lord Jesus high up above all, that so He may be a world’s wonder to men and angels: for to speak rawly<sup>2</sup> and caldriffly<sup>3</sup> of Christ, and not to grow continually in the praises of His excellence, is one of the faults of the friends of the Bridegroom.

*Use Second:* If there be so meikle<sup>1</sup> to be spoken of Him, while we are here, O then, when we come to our Father’s house, and shall see Him as He is, face to face, what large thoughts shall there be of Him then, when

<sup>1</sup> Much.

<sup>2</sup> Unpreparedly.

<sup>3</sup> Indifferently.

the thoughts that are of Him in the kingdom of grace are so great! What shall these thoughts be of Him that shall be in the kingdom of glory? What marvel is it that that song of His praises lasts for ever and ever, that they never weary who sing this song, for He will byde<sup>1</sup> all the songs of praise of the glorified. [Why] but we to whom Christ has given pawns<sup>2</sup> this day that He was slain for our sins, what should we do to Him again, but lift Him up high in our praises and put Christ high in His rowme<sup>3</sup>, and everything under Him in their rowme?<sup>3</sup>

*Third use:* If it be so that our Lord is so high that He can never be enough praised, why is there so meikle din this day in Scotland for adhering to a covenant and for quitting of a covenant? No, the din<sup>4</sup> is not for a covenant or a ceremony, or such a thing is not the main thing that is in controversy in Scotland this day. But whether Christ should be only King and Priest unto His own Kirk to give out laws, or if men should rule there as they please. And this should put all Scotland and all the world to it to hazard for such a glorious Lord as Christ is.

Before the apostle go from this he has a word that is worthy to be observed before we leave it, "*Christ Jesus my Lord.*" When the apostle is speaking of Christ, he must have a kiss of Him to himself by the way, he must of necessity speak something to let his hearers know what he thought of Christ. To teach us this far that whenever we speak of Christ, whenever we preach of Him, or

<sup>1</sup> All their songs of praise will not surpass what He is.

<sup>2</sup> Pledges.

<sup>3</sup> Place.

<sup>4</sup> Noise of battle.

whenever we hear of Him, to strive evermore to apply Him, and to take Him home to ourselves. There be three good reasons of this, why both the apostle and all others with him, they should labour to apply Christ unto themselves when He comes near unto them any way.

First: Because to speak or hear of His name and not to smell of Him thereafter, it is a very great miss when Christ speaks to us and comes to offer Himself to you in the sacrament. When Christ goes away, and has not met with you and thou hast not gotten a kiss of Him, woe! to that person whoever they be, woe! to that soul to whom Christ offers Himself, and they notwithstanding get no good of Him. Christ comes to thy elbows, thy eyes, and thy ears, and all the parts of thy body, and soul; and yet, between you and God,<sup>1</sup> if thou can say, thou has met with Him to day, and woe to them that cannot say it. And this apostle he has reason to speak of Christ, for he knows His worth and excellency (Col. i.), he is speaking a word of Christ there, and having spoken a word for Him, he digresses a little from his text, that he may speak more of Christ (v. 15), "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in the earth, visible and invisible," &c. It is even with all of them that has a right estimation of Christ as with them that go unto their coffer and see gold lying there and stay a while tirling<sup>2</sup> it over, they have such pleasure in it. So is it with all those who get a glance of Christ in the Word or the sacraments.

<sup>1</sup> Would that.

<sup>2</sup> Turning.

Second: Those who have gotten a sight of Him, they ought to stand still and look more upon Him, for He is well worth looking on. And we who are ministers, if we carry Christ to others, and be gathering in the Lord's bride to Him, should not we ourselves be the better and get our drink silver<sup>1</sup> at the least? Woe! to them that preach Christ to others, whatever they be, and cannot say, "My Lord Jesus Christ."

A Third reason for this is, because wherever Christ is rightly and kindly spoken of, He evermore leaves tokens that He has been there, He leaves some drops of myrrh behind Him, and that makes them speak more to His commendation.

*Use:* All these who have heard of Christ this day, and have been partaker of Him in the sacrament, let them take something of Christ home with them—sick folk, take home physic with you; blind folk, take home eyes with you; lame folk, take home feet and hands with you; ignorants, take home knowledge with you, for Christ is all in all, and this is indeed to eat and to drink worthily.

Another word. Let us mark of this that the apostle says, "*Christ Jesus my Lord.*" This is a homely word that He speaks, even as if there had been no moe<sup>2</sup> in heaven or in earth who had right to Him. It might have been said to Paul, Is Christ yours more than He is the world's? Yes; but He is common to all believers. Christ is like a ship that is divided among so many owners. The ship belongs to every one of them. Even so David, and Thomas, and His apostles, and all believers have their

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, our perquisites.

<sup>2</sup> More.

own property in Christ. And yet, albeit He be a common Saviour to all believers, yet every believer in particular may make Christ his treasure and his portion, and this should hearten<sup>1</sup> us to go in application of Christ to ourselves as ours, and never to rest till we come to that. There is no common thing in the world like unto Christ, for He is free to all believers, even all that are in Him. The saints they have a free heritage that no man has anything to say against it. Where was he that could ever say: "The sun, the moon, the earth were his property"? These things are common to all, and every one is like to scart<sup>2</sup> out other's eyes for them; but having once gotten Christ by faith in thy soul, thou may say of Him, "My Lord and my God;" and O! but thou art rich for evermore who can say this far indeed, and art sure of it.

The apostle he goes on and says: "*I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.*" The word in the original is, "I have made shipwreck of all things." He says, "I am content to cast away all the gold pasments, all the satins, all the velvets that I had being a Pharisee, and let them tine<sup>3</sup> for Christ. I am content to quit them all, and to let them all go to nothing, to that end that I may make Christ my gain." And the apostle he speaks not here of himself only as an apostle, but he speaks of himself as a believer, and speaks after that manner. Tine<sup>4</sup> what he will, he shall aye keep Christ to the fore.<sup>5</sup> And indeed He is well worthy of His rowme,<sup>6</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Encourage.<sup>2</sup> Scratch.<sup>3</sup> Perish.<sup>4</sup> Lose.<sup>5</sup> Before him, or in his possession.<sup>6</sup> Place.

woe! is [to] them, and they shall say it one day, Woe! is [to] them for evermore, who cast Christ overboard that they may keep Christ and honour and the world. And there are four sorts of persons who wrong Christ this way.

First: There are some who have even heavy a loadening<sup>1</sup> in already, and so cast Christ overboard, because Christ and that loadening<sup>1</sup> which they have already, cannot agree, and before they quit their other loadening they will quit Christ—1 Tim. vi. 9: "They who will be rich fall into divers temptations and snares, and into many hurtful and foolish lusts, which draw men into destruction and perdition." It is not said that they are rich, but they who will be rich. They resolve that they will take in a burden of the world and will sail to heaven with [it]. Nay two ills light upon such.

First: The world and Christ they will never agree together. Your gain, your ease, your credit, your riches, &c., they may well agree with Christ as long as the weather is fair and both go one gate.<sup>2</sup> But stay till the wind change, and it come to that whether you will quit your credit, your gain, your pleasures, &c., or Christ and religion, and it will be seen then, that such take them to the world, and to things thereof, and are content that Christ and religion and a covenant and conscience be all casten overboard. Let them sink or swim rather ere they quit their temporal peace, or ease, or gain. And O! but that be a miserable change.

Again: Where the love of the world and the things

<sup>1</sup> Load.

<sup>2</sup> Way. . .



thereof carry over<sup>1</sup> high a sail, and are proud of them, He denies to give them grace, for He resists the proud. They content themselves with the outside of religion, and labour not for the power thereof. Alas! Is this holiness enough? to come to the communion, to sit reverently in the kirk, and have no more but that? I grant it is not ill indeed. But if thou hast no more of religion but that, it will be a sail to blow full of wind and blow you into the midst of the sea and drown you. For the Lord He shall seek an account of you for all the occasions of the Word and Sacraments and other exercises of that kind that ye have been at albeit the most part see not this, and shall ask of them, how they have profited by every one of these occasions? and He shall try and search them whether they came in sincerity to seek the Lord in all these exercises, or if their errand was to seek any other thing.

There is a thrid<sup>2</sup> sort of persons that are sailing, but they are sailing close under the water; and these are they who know that they do wrong, and yet notwithstanding, they will go on in that same ill course; and, indeed, if there be a fearful case of impenitence in the world, this is most fearful, to add drunkenness to thirst,<sup>3</sup> and to walk on into the imaginations of their own heart, saying, they shall have peace in so doing. The Lord will not spare such, but the anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against them. And—

Lastly: There be some that this cancer and ill are into the spirit; they pre-suppose that they have faith, and yet it is but a rotten faith. Look to the faith of many,

<sup>1</sup> Too,<sup>2</sup> Third,<sup>3</sup> Thirst.

and it will be found to be thus with them. O woe! to you for evermore, who are beguiled in a matter of such consequence as this. Every man trows<sup>1</sup> that his profession and his grace are good enough, that there is neither crack nor flaw into it, and yet many are deceived. Never man suspected his own gold but it is good enough, and yet many have but brass instead of it. It were meikle<sup>2</sup> better for us in time to try whether we be in the faith or not, than thus to be deceived in a matter of so great importance, for woe! to them for evermore who beguile themselves in such a matter as this, that when they go at that last day to open up their profession, to find out their faith and their grace, and that they find nothing there, but only a show, and a fair glori-fienkun<sup>3</sup>—think you not but this will be a miserable mistake to many? Aye! that it will; and so learn to beware of it.

“*All things.*” What should Paul cast this away and make shipwreck of it, to be of Israel, to be come of the tribe of Benjamin, to be as touching the law a Pharisee, blameless before all men? *Answer*: Yes; the world and all that is in it is to be casten away, in three cases.

First: The world is to be casten away in so far as it is an idol, and when it will be in Christ's place. In that case cast overboard with it.

Second: If the world will have the yolk of your love, and the heart of it, then the world is not worth the keeping. When the apostle looked upon all other things into the world that he loved, and laid them into the

<sup>1</sup> Believes.

<sup>2</sup> Much.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps for *Aichen*, anything very small—a snowflake.

balance, and laid Christ His alone <sup>1</sup> in the other balance, he found Him to be weightier than all, that He far over-values them all, and sees that he has been no other but a befooled man in setting his heart upon them so long, and so is content to quit them all for gaining Christ.

Third: We must quit the world and the things thereof. If there come a competition between Christ and them, that we must either quit the one or the other, as sometimes there will come terms of competition this way,<sup>2</sup> *in foro contradictorio* as they say—the matter will be soon decided by one who looks to heaven and to glory that is to be had by adhering to the Son of God, and then looks to the hundreds of all other things. They will say, “To hell with all other things that would hinder me from bruicking<sup>3</sup> the Son of God.” “Court, go thy way, and take thy leave, and all the pleasures thereof,” Daniel says, “and welcome death, and to be all torn with wild beasts rather ere I quit to speak with God in prayer.” “I here write a free resignation of the world and all things therein, rather ere I want a communion that way with heaven. This seems to be a fair spoken word, to quit all things in the world for a communion with Christ. And yet there be four things in Christ that will say that, without exception, all other things should be quit for Him.

First: Look what Christ Himself is—He is all love. He is all essential love, for if the creatures have any good thing in them to draw the heart after them, they have it only from Christ.

<sup>1</sup> By himself.

<sup>2</sup> In the market where there are competing sellers, or at the bar where there are opposing advocates.

<sup>3</sup> Enjoying.

Second : See what the Scripture says of the loss of heaven and the loss of other things. Matt. x. 99 : "He that findeth his life shall lose it ;" Matt. xiii. 46 : "This is the pearl hid, which when a man had found, he went and sold all that he had and bought it." What will buy heaven ? If all the angels in heaven were sold, what would they do to the buying of heaven ? Ay ! albeit there were as many of them as there have fallen drops of rain since the world began, and a thousand times more, they were not all able to buy it. So that there is no loss comparable to the loss of heaven. What reck<sup>1</sup> of the loss of gear, wife, children, country, &c., if thou keep heaven and keep Christ. Thou may then look over thy shoulder and laugh at them, and look to Him who can carry you through the sea dry shod, and will bear you through all difficulties, and at last set you in glory.

The third consideration to make us quit the world for Christ, is in consideration how the Scripture sets Christ above all things both as God and man. First as God (Isa. xl. 18) He is set alone : "To whom will ye liken God ? or what likeness will ye compare with Him ?" And then as man, He is always alone also both as king, priest, and prophet—Psa. lxxii. : Kings they are put beneath Christ, for they must all fall down before Him. All kings think it an honour to hold Christ's stirrup and acknowledge that to be true which is written of Him—Rev. xix. 16 : "King of kings and Lord of lords." There was never another gat that style but Himself ; and Heb. x. 12 : All priests are put under Him and prophets also, for Moses is put down and Christ is put

<sup>1</sup> Care for.

up. And the angels, who are far above any creature, they are all of them put down and Christ is put up. And then, in His power, He passes all other kings. Who is there that has such a cloak to put about him as glory? and who has such chariots at their command as He has? who can say that word which He says, Isa. 1. : "I, at My rebuke, dry up the sea; I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh; . . . I clothe the heavens with darkness, and I make sackcloth their covering?" Will ye tell me where dwells that king that can draw a web of darkness from the east to the west, so that at midday nothing shall be seen if he please? Where is that king that can dry up the Red Sea at his pleasure? Kings are only kings on land, but they cannot command the sea. They have not the chair which is spoken of Psa. xxix.: "The Lord has His chair in the seas." That is the Lord's royal chair that belongs to Him only. The Lord He is God of the sea and of the land also, and is another manner of monarch in battle nor <sup>1</sup> poor silly <sup>2</sup> bits of clay are.

And then the last consideration is that there is no benefit of God good unless we get Christ with it.

Let our *use* of all this be to stir up all these who spend their love, their confidence, their fear, upon the earth and the things thereof, to come here and to ware <sup>3</sup> all upon this one thing; poor bits of needy creatures that fall in love with the world and the things thereof, that are so toom <sup>4</sup> and empty, come here and fall in love with Christ who can furnish you all things whereof you stand in need. O! fools, that they are, who are tooming <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Than.    <sup>2</sup> Weak, frail.    <sup>3</sup> Spend.    <sup>4</sup> Emptying; see note p. 17.

their purse, and yet, for all that, get no bread to stay their hunger. They are reprov'd for it, Isa. lv. : "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which will not satisfy." O! that we could learn to set all our desires upon our lovely Jesus, and learn to find and see all that we desire in Him; as, indeed, all that we can think of is completely in Him. If this were known and believed, certainly we would not so much set our hearts and our affections upon other lovers as now we do.

*"And do count them all but dung that I may win Christ."* The word that is before is not in the first language here, for the superexcellent knowledge of Christ, as some translate it, but it is for Christ Himself. It tells us this far, that there was no created thing beside Jesus that He was seeking, telling us this also, what it is that is the formal object whereunto the soul looks, and what it would be at. It is not the remission of their sins, or peace of conscience, sanctification, justification, or any of these things that are purchased to us by Christ, but it is Christ Himself they would be at. Look, then, if that be the proper thing whereunto your soul looks, to be in hands with Christ, John i. 12: "To as many as received Him, He gave them power to become the sons of God;" 1 John v. 12: "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life." That is the main thing the child of God desires to be in hands with, even with Christ Himself; to be seeking to have a full portion of joy in the Holy Ghost. But seek Christ before that. Conviction of sin may be sought for, but Christ Himself is more.

The losing of a hard heart may be sought from Christ, and yet Christ Himself is more, and therefore He should rather be sought. And look unto thir<sup>2</sup> two things, ye will see good reason for it.

First: See what the Lord's covenant says, "I will be thy God and God of thy seed." Abraham he gets that of God in place of all other things. Christ is the only treasure and the only storehouse that the weary traveller can look unto so long as they are on their journey.

Again, all these other things, beside Christ or without Him, they are nothing else but creatures. To seek forgiveness of sin, joy in the Holy Ghost, losing of a hard heart, &c., it is to seek the creature without the Creator. The learned call all these things *objectum quo*, but Christ is *objectum quod*. Christ is the only bolster whereon the wearied soul can rest itself. How little think ye would a soul sensible of Christ's presence, or His absence, be affected with anything that they could get, if so be they get not Christ Himself at a communion? It is good, indeed, to get the remission of sins, or strength to walk in His ways; but it is best of all to get Christ Himself. You know whoever marries a bridegroom they put a difference between himself and the rings, jewels, and other propines<sup>2</sup> that are sent by him to her. Now all these things are so, being contradistinguished from Christ Himself. They are the gifts wherewith He propined<sup>3</sup> His bride, and so should love Himself above all these things.

Look unto two or three examples of this preferring Christ to all things else, Cant. iii. See how many the

<sup>1</sup> These.

<sup>2</sup> Presents.

<sup>3</sup> Presented.

spouse of Christ had there to comfort her, and would not be comforted by any of them, but only by Himself. She was in her bed, and it would be thought her warm bed would comfort her, but it did not. Nor were there any in the streets that could comfort her, neither watchman nor virgins, but she says, "Saw ye Him whom my soul loves," so that she declares that Christ Himself is more to be desired than any other is. And Mary Magdalene (John xx.) had odd<sup>1</sup> company with her, five chief apostles. If she had been a Papist, she would have thought it better company to be at the holy grave. Beside these, she had the company of the angels and Christ Himself, but she took Him for the gardener. But all these could not comfort her. The angels and Christ ask her, "Woman, why weepest thou? What ails thee? Hadst thou not good company here, having the disciples, the angels, and the gardener?" But she says, "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him, that I may take Him away." "A fig for them all!" would she say, "fra<sup>2</sup> I want Christ."

*Use:* If God would give unto you all created pleasures and big<sup>3</sup> you a Paradise of all created things, yet never be content until ye get Christ Himself. A soul that is sensible of Christ will be like one out of their own element without Christ. O! if thou kent<sup>4</sup> what Christ were would thou count thy cothouse, or some of thy world's goods, or a pint or quart of blood over meikle<sup>5</sup> to quit for Christ? Whoever does so knows not Christ rightly. O! to be in love with Christ and to love Him-

<sup>1</sup> Uncommon.<sup>2</sup> Since.<sup>3</sup> Build.<sup>4</sup> Knew.<sup>5</sup> Much.



self for Himself. That would put some moderation upon our sorrow when we go away from the communion, not having so meikle<sup>1</sup> faith, so meikle<sup>1</sup> love, so meikle<sup>1</sup> repentance, so meikle<sup>1</sup> joy, &c., as we would wish having gotten some sense of Christ Himself coming into the soul. O! sound may they sleep the night who have gotten this. Lord, send it to them who want it, and confirm it to them who have gotten any measure of it. And to this, Lord Jesus, to His Father, and to our Father, and the Holy Spirit, be glory and praise for ever and ever.—Amen. *℥*

<sup>1</sup> Much.