

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

You have but a little way to go!

"Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed." Romans 13:11

You are within a few days march of heaven! Salvation is near to you. Christians, it is but a little while, and you will be done *weeping* and *praying*--and be *triumphing*!

You shall put off your mourning garments--and put on white robes! You shall put off your battle armour--and put on a victorious crown! You are almost ready to commence eternal glory!

When a man is almost at the end of a race--will he tire, or faint away? You have but a little way to go--and you will set your foot in heaven! Though the way is uphill and full of thorns; yet you have gone the greatest part of your way, and shortly shall rest from your labours! "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom!" Luke 12:32

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

For to me, to live is Christ

Paul was a great admirer of Christ. He desired to know nothing but Christ, and Him crucified. "**For to me, to live is Christ** and to die is gain!" Philippians 1:21

"For to me, to live is Christ." That is, "Christ is my life!" Or thus, "My life is made up of Christ." As a wicked man's life is made up of sin, so Paul's life was made up of Christ --he was full of Christ. That I may give you the sense of the text more fully, take it in these three particulars:

[1] "For to me, to live is Christ," that is--**Christ is the PRINCIPLE of my life.** I fetch my spiritual life from Christ, as the branch fetches its sap from the root. "Christ lives in me." Gal. 2:20. Jesus Christ sends forth life into me, to quicken me to every holy action. Thus, Christ is the principle of my life; from His fullness I live--as the branch lives from the root.

[2] "For to me, to live is Christ," that is--**Christ is the END of my life.** I live not for myself--but for Christ. All my living, is to do service to Christ. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord." Rom. 14:8.

We lay out ourselves wholly for Christ. The design of our life is to exalt Christ, and to make the crown upon His head flourish. In this sense, Christ is the end of my life--when my whole life is a living for Christ.

[3] "For to me, to live is Christ," that is--**Christ is the JOY of my life**. Psalm 43:4, "God my exceeding joy," or the cream of my joy. A Christian can rejoice in Christ, when worldly joys are gone. When the tulip in a garden withers--a man still rejoices in his jewels which are locked up in the house. Just so--when worldly joys are gone--a saint can rejoice in Christ, the pearl of great price. In this sense, Christ is the joy of my life--if Christ were gone, my life would be a death to me. "For to me, to live is Christ!" Christ is the principle of my life, the end of my life, the joy of my life. If we can say, "For to me, to live is Christ," we may comfortably conclude, "and to die is gain!"



A love letter sent to you from God

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Colossians 3:16

STUDY the Scripture. It is a copy of God's will. Be Scripture-men, Bible-Christians. Search the Scripture, as for a vein of silver. This blessed Book will fill your head with knowledge, and your heart with grace!

There is **majesty** sparkling in every line of Scripture.

There is a **melody** in Scripture. This is that blessed harp which drives away sadness of spirit. How sweetly does this harp of Scripture sound, what heavenly music does it make in the ears of a distressed sinner, especially when the finger of God's Spirit touches this instrument!

There is **divinity** in Scripture. It contains the marrow and quintessence of true religion. It is a rock of diamonds, a mystery of piety. The lips of Scripture have grace poured into them. The Scripture speaks of faith, self-denial, and all the graces which, as a chain of pearls, adorns a Christian.

Oh, then, search the Scripture! Had I the tongue of angels, I could not sufficiently set forth the excellency of Scripture. It is a spiritual telescope, in which we behold God's glory; it is the tree of life, the oracle of wisdom, the rule of manners, the heavenly seed of which the new creature is formed.

'The two Testaments,' says Austin, 'are the two breasts which every Christian must suck, that he may get spiritual nourishment.' These holy leaves of Scripture are for the healing of our souls.

The Scripture is **profitable** for all things. If we are deserted-- here is spiced wine that cheers the heavy heart; if we are pursued by Satan--here is the sword of the Spirit to resist him; if we are diseased with sin's leprosy--here are the waters of the sanctuary, both to cleanse and cure. Oh, then, search the Scriptures!

Read the Bible with **reverence**. Think, in every line you read--that *God is speaking to you*. The ark wherein the Word was put was overlaid with pure gold, and was carried on bars, that the Levites might not touch it. Exodus 25:14. Why was this--but to give reverence to the Word?

Read with *seriousness*. It is matter of life and death; by this Word you must be tried and judged.

Read the Word with *affection*. Get your hearts quickened with the Word. Labour that the Word may not only be a lamp to direct--but a fire to warm. Read the Scripture, not only as a history--but as a **love letter sent to you from God**, which may affect your hearts. Pray that the same Spirit who wrote the Word may assist you in reading it; that God's Spirit would show you the wonderful things of His law, so that the Word will become effectual.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine!

If God is infinite, see what a full portion the saints have. They have Him who is infinite, for their portion! His fullness is an infinite fullness; and He is infinitely sweet, as well as infinitely full. He is infinitely full of beauty and of love. His riches are called *unsearchable*, because they are infinite. Stretch your thoughts as much as you can, there is that in God which exceeds; it is an infinite fullness.

"Now to Him who is able to do **immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine!**" Ephesians 3:20. What can an ambitious person ask? He can ask crowns and kingdoms, millions of worlds; but God can give more than we can ask, nay, more than we can imagine, because He is infinite!

We can imagine--what if all the dust were turned to silver; what if every flower were a ruby; what if every sand in the sea were a diamond; yet God can give more than we can imagine, because He is infinite. **Oh, how rich are they who have the infinite God for their portion!** Well might David say, "Surely I have a delightful inheritance!"

We may go with the bee from flower to flower--but we shall never have full satisfaction until we come to the infinite God!

Jacob said: "I have enough!" In the Hebrew it is, "I have all!" because he had the infinite God for his portion!

God being an infinite fullness, there is no fear of lack for any of the heirs of heaven. Though there are millions of saints and angels who have a share in God's riches, yet He has enough for them all--because He is infinite! Though a thousand men behold the sun--there is light enough for them all. Put ever so many buckets into the sea--there is water enough to fill them. Though an innumerable company of saints and angels are to be filled out of God's fullness, yet God, being infinite, has enough to satisfy them. God has land enough to give to all His heirs. There can be no lack, in that which is infinite.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Totus oculus

"Him who is **perfect in knowledge.**" Job 37:16

God's knowledge is **infallible**; there is no mistake in His knowledge. Human knowledge is subject to error. A physician may mistake the treatment of a disease; but God's knowledge is unerring. He can neither deceive, nor be deceived. He cannot deceive--because He is truth; nor be deceived--because He has infinite wisdom.

God's knowledge is **instantaneous**. Our knowledge is successive--one thing after another. God knows things past, present, and to come--at once. They are all before Him in one entire prospect.

God's knowledge is **retentive**; He never loses any of His knowledge; He remembers as well as understands. Many things elapse out of our minds--but God's knowledge is eternalized. Things transacted a thousand years ago, are as fresh to Him as if they were done but the last minute! Thus He is perfect in knowledge.

God is ***totus oculus***, "All eye!"

It ought to be so; for He is the "Judge of all the world." There are so many causes to be brought before Him, and so many people to be tried, that He must have a perfect knowledge--or He could not do justice. A human judge cannot proceed without a jury; the jury must search the cause, and give in the verdict. But God can judge without a jury. He knows all things in and of Himself, and needs no witnesses to inform Him. A human judge judges only matters of *fact*--but God judges the *heart*! He not only judges wicked actions--but wicked designs! He sees the treason of the heart, and punishes it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Enough to put them into a cold sweat!

The sinner takes liberty to sin; he breaks God's laws with greediness, as if he could not sin fast enough.

Remember--the *pleasures of sin* are but for a season, but the torments of the wicked are forever! Sinners have a short feast--but a long reckoning!

"The smoke of their torment rises forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night." Rev. 14:11

Here is thunder and lightning to the wicked. God is eternal, therefore the torments of the wicked are eternal! God lives forever; and as long as God lives, He will be punishing the damned!

Remember, one of God's names is *Eternal*, and as long as God is eternal, He has time enough to reckon with all His enemies!

Origen erroneously thought, that after a thousand years, the damned would be released out of their misery. But the *worm*, the *fire*, the prison--are all eternal.

Eternity is a sea without bottom and banks. After millions of years, there is not one minute in eternity spent; and the damned must be ever burning--but never consumed; always dying--but never dead. "They shall seek death--but shall not find it."

The fire of hell is such, as *multitudes* of tears will not quench it; and length of time will not finish it! The vial of God's wrath will be always dropping upon the sinner! As long as God is eternal, He lives to be avenged upon the wicked.

Oh eternity! eternity! who can fathom it? Mariners have their plummets to measure the depths of the sea; but what line or plummet shall we use to fathom the depth of eternity? The breath of the Lord kindles the infernal lake, (Isaiah 30:33) where shall we get buckets to quench that fire?

Oh eternity! If all the body of the *earth* and *sea* were turned to sand, and all the *air* up to the starry heaven were nothing but sand--and a little bird should come every thousand years, and fetch away in her bill but the tenth part of a grain of all that heap of sand; what numberless years would be spent before that vast heap of sand would be fetched away! Yet, if at the end of all that time, the sinner might come out of hell--there would be some *hope*. But that word "Forever" breaks the heart!

What a terror is this to the wicked--enough to put them into a cold sweat--to think, as long as God is eternal, He lives forever to be avenged upon them!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

A divine chemistry

"For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory!" 2 Corinthians 4:17

The wisdom of God is seen in making the most desperate evils, work to the good of His children. As several poisonous ingredients, wisely tempered by the skill of the apothecary, make a sovereign medicine--so God makes the most deadly afflictions work together for the good of His children. He uses severe afflictions to purify them, and prepare them for heaven.

These *hard frosts* hasten the spring flowers of glory! The wise God, by a divine chemistry, turns our afflictions into cordials. He makes His people gainers by losses; and turns their crosses into blessings!



Sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly

See the evil effects of sin!

Sin has degraded us of our honour. God made us in His own image; but sin has debased us. Sin has plucked off our coat of innocence, and now it has debased us, and turned our glory into shame.

Sin disquiets the peace of the soul. "But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud. "There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked." Isaiah 57:20-21. Whatever defiles, disturbs. As poison corrupts the blood, so sin corrupts the soul. Sin breeds a trembling at the heart; it creates fears, and there is "torment in fear." Sin makes sad convulsions in the *conscience*. Judas was so terrified with guilt and horror, that he hanged himself to quiet his conscience. In order to ease his conscience--he threw himself into hell.

Sin produces all temporal evil. It is the Trojan horse, which has sword, and famine and pestilence, in its belly. Sin is a coal, which not only blackens--but burns. Sin creates all our troubles; it puts gravel into our bread, and wormwood in our cup. Sin rots the name, consumes the estate, buries loved ones.

Sin unrepented of, brings final damnation. The canker which breeds in the rose is the cause of its perishing; just so--the corruptions which breed in men's souls are the cause of their damning. Sin's pleasure will turn to sorrow at last; like the book the prophet ate--sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. Sin brings the wrath of God--what tears can quench that fire?



A dish which men cannot refrain from

"How long will you love vanity?" Psalm 4:2

How strange it is, that anyone should love such a deadly evil as sin! **Sin is a dish which men cannot refrain from**, though it makes them sick. What pity it is, that so sweet an affection as love, should be poured upon so filthy a thing as sin! Sin brings a sting in the conscience, and a curse in the estate; yet men love

it. A sinner is the greatest self-denier; for his sin he will deny himself a part in heaven.

Do anything rather than sin. Oh, hate sin! There is more evil in the least sin-- than in the greatest bodily evils which can befall us. There is more evil in a drop of sin--than in a sea of affliction! Affliction is like a *rip* in a coat--but sin a *stab* at the heart! In affliction there is some good--in this lion there is some honey to be found. "It is good for me that I was afflicted." Psalm 119:71.

"Affliction is God's flail to thresh off our husks. Affliction does not consume-- but refines." (Augustine) But there is no good in sin; it is the quintessence of evil. Sin is worse than hell; for the pains of hell are a burden to the creature only; but sin is a burden to God!

Is sin so great an evil? Then how thankful should you be to God, if He has taken away your sin! "I have taken away your sins." Zech. 3:4. If you had a disease on your body--how thankful would you be to have it taken away! Much more to have sin taken away. God takes away the guilt of sin by pardoning grace, and the power of sin by mortifying grace.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The devil's workshop

"The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked.

Who really knows how bad it is?" Jer. 17:9

Sin has defiled the heart. The heart is deadly wicked. It is a lesser hell. In the heart are legions of lusts, obdurateness, infidelity, hypocrisy, sinful lusts. It boils as the sea--with passion and revenge. "The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live." Ecclesiastes 9:3.

The heart is the **devil's workshop**, where all mischief is framed.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

The effectual call

"Those He predestined, He also **called**." Romans 8:30

The **cause** of the effectual call is God's electing love. It is not because some are more *worthy* to partake of the heavenly calling than others. What worthiness is in us? What worthiness was there in *Mary Magdalene*, out of whom seven devils were cast? What worthiness in the *Corinthians*, before God called them by His gospel? They were "idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and swindlers." 1 Cor. 6:9-10. Before effectual calling, we are not only "without strength," but "enemies to God." So that the foundation of effectual calling is election--and not merit.

The effectual call is **powerful**. God puts forth infinite power in calling home a sinner to Himself. He not only puts forth His *voice*--but His *arm*! He conquers the pride of the heart, and makes the stubborn will, to yield and stoop to His grace; He makes the stony heart bleed. The effectual call is mighty and powerful. God puts forth a divine energy, nay, a kind of omnipotence; it is such a powerful call, that the will of man has no power effectually to resist.

Consider what you were **before** God called you! "You were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins!" Ephesians 2:1. When God called Paul, he found him persecuting; when he called Zacchaeus, he found him using extortion. When God calls a man by His grace, He finds him seeking after his lusts; as when Saul was called to the kingdom, he was seeking the donkeys. Admire God's love, exalt His praise--that He should call you when you were in the hot pursuit of sin!

What mercy is this--that God should call **you**, and pass by others! "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight!" That God should pass by wise and noble people; or people of sweeter disposition, better morals, greater abilities, guilty of less vice--and that the lot of free grace should fall upon you--oh, the astonishing love of God!

As God so governs the *clouds*, that He makes them rain upon one place, and not upon another--just so, at a *sermon* the Lord opens the heart of one, and another is no more affected with it than a deaf man with the sound of music! Here the banner of *free grace* is displayed!

When two are living together--husband and wife, or father and child--that God should call one by His grace, and leave the other in his sins, and let the other perish eternally--oh infinite rich grace! How should they that are called be affected with God's sovereign love! How should the *vessels of mercy* run over

with thankfulness! Such as are *trophies of mercy*, should be trumpeters of praise. Thus Paul, being effectually called by God, and seeing what a debtor he was to free grace, breaks forth into admiration and gratitude, "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" 2 Corinthians 9:15



There are many roaring devils around us!

There is nothing that more troubles a child of God, than that he fears he shall never hold out. "These weak legs of mine," he says, "will never carry me to heaven." But he is kept by the power of God! Once in Christ—forever in Christ. A believer may fall from some degrees of grace; but not from the *state* of grace.

How despairing is the Arminian doctrine of *falling* from grace! Today a saint--tomorrow a reprobate; today a Peter--tomorrow a Judas! This is like boring a hole in a vessel--to make all the wine of his joy run out. Were the Arminian doctrine true, what comfort would it be--to have one's name written in the book of life--if it might be blotted out again? But be assured, for your comfort, that grace--if it is *true*--though ever so *weak*, shall persevere.

"Who are **kept by the power of God** through faith unto salvation." 1 Peter 1:5

See whence it is--that believers persevere in holiness. It is to be ascribed solely to the power of God. It is a wonder that any Christian perseveres, if you consider:

(1.) **Corruption within.** There is more sin than grace; yet grace is habitually predominant. Grace is like a spark in the sea--it is a wonder that it is not quenched! It is a wonder that sin does not destroy grace.

(2.) **Temptations without.** Satan envies us happiness, and he raises his militia, and stirs up persecution. He shoots his *fiery darts of temptations*--which are called *darts* for their swiftness, *fiery* for their terribleness. We are every day beset with devils! As it was a wonder that Daniel was kept alive in the midst of the roaring lions, so **there are many roaring devils around us**--and yet we are not torn in pieces! Now, whence is it, that we stand against these powerful temptations? We are kept by the power of God!

(3.) **The world's old snares--riches and pleasure.** How many have been shipwrecked upon these golden rocks! "Demas has deserted me, because he loved this present world." 2 Timothy 4:10

What a wonder any persevere in holiness--that the *earth* does not choke the fire of all holy affections! Whence is this, but from the power of God? We are kept by His power.

"My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, *and they will never perish--ever!* No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand!" John 10:27-29