

Title:            **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

Text:            Colossians 3:11

Subject:        “*Christ is All*”

Date:            Sunday Morning — March 18, 2017

Reading:        *Colossians 3:1-25*

(Colossians 3:1-25) If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (2) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (4) When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (5) Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: (6) For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: (7) In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. (8) But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. (9) Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

old man with his deeds; (10) And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: (11) Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all. (12) Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; (13) Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also *do* ye. (14) And above all these things *put on* charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (15) And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. (16) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (17) And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. (18) Wives, submit

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. (19) Husbands, love *your* wives, and be not bitter against them. (20) Children, obey *your* parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. (21) Fathers, provoke not your children *to anger*, lest they be discouraged. (22) Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God: (23) And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; (24) Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. (25) But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.

**INTRODUCTION**

If you will open your Bibles to the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the Gospel of Colossians, and just keep them open there, I want to talk to you about **THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I EVER LEARNED.**

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

Reading through some of Bro. Henry Mahan's old church bulletins, I ran across a brief article that the Lord used to inspire the message I believe he has given me for you. The article was in the **Thirteenth Street Baptist Church Bulletin**, for **May 19, 2002**, just a couple of years before Bro. Mahan resigned as pastor, after 54 years of faithful labor. That particular bulletin contained several short articles about preaching and this one, titled "**The Musing of A Pastor.**" I found it almost prophetic. It was written by C. H. Spurgeon in 1878.

"I sometimes think if I were in heaven, I should almost wish to visit this congregation to see whether it will abide the test of time and prosper in the work of our Lord when I am gone. Will you keep to the truth? Will you hold to the grand old doctrines of the gospel? Or will this church, like so many others, go astray from the simplicity of its faith and set up gaudy services and false doctrine? God forbid it!"

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

When I read those words, I immediately began to think about the tremendous influence Bro. Mahan has had on my life and ministry, and the things God has taught me through his servant, praying, “Heavenly Father, give me grace to hold fast that form of sound words which you have taught me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, that which you have committed to my trust by your Spirit, for the glory of Christ.”

**I first met Bro. Mahan in the Fall of 1969** in my home town, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He was preaching at **Rosemont Baptist Church**, where **Bro. Herbert Wilson** was pastor. I was privileged to hear him preach twice that week. The first message was from the Book of Ruth, on **Christ Our Kinsman Redeemer**. The second was **A Picture of God’s Sovereign Grace**, from the first three chapters of Hosea.

After that, though I frequently heard others mention his name, I did not see or hear Bro. Mahan again, for six years. Then, in April of 1976 — (42 years ago —

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

I was 26 years old.), as I was driving to a Bible conference in Lexington, Kentucky, I decided to stop by Ashland.

**VISITED MAHAN**

As I said, I had heard a good bit about Bro. Mahan, mostly from people who spoke less than admirably about him. So, I wanted to see if I might not be able to impart some of my great wisdom and knowledge to him. When I walked into his office and introduced myself, he was preparing a message for his television broadcast, to be taped that night. We chatted for about two hours. I asked him about prophecy, church discipline, the decrees of God, and a good many other things.

Bro. Mahan was very cordial, all the time I was running off at the mouth. Then, as I started to leave, he turned his Bible around and pointed to the text from which he was planning to preach, and said, “Bro. Fortner, I want you to read this,” pointing to Colossians 3:11. So I started to read, and he stopped

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

me. “No, no, just these three words,” he said, as he underlined, “Christ is all.” I read them, and looked up with a look that must have been shouting, “So what?”

**Then, that wise man spoke as a prophet to my soul.** — “If you ever learn the meaning of those three words, you will understand the message of this Book, and God might use you to preach it.”

**HOSPITALIZED**

Just a few weeks later, the Lord God graciously caused me to hear what he had told me by his servant. I had been preaching for more than eight years at the time, and I was about 4 and 1/2 years into my first pastorate. During those earliest years of my ministry, **I was a strict Calvinist and a thoroughly convinced Baptist. My doctrine was precisely accurate and orthodox. I gave myself relentlessly to the work of the ministry. But something was missing. My ministry lacked heart and fire.** — **I had everything, except a message eternity bound**

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

**sinner needed to hear.**

Then the Lord laid me flat on my back in a hospital for twenty-one days. The doctors told me I had cancer. It had already progressed to the advanced stages. My doctors did not expect me to survive. Immediately, I began to evaluate my life's work, thinking that it might come to an end in the very near future.

After honest, heart-searching evaluation before God, I had to conclude that those first eight years of preaching had amounted to very little, if indeed to anything. **I could not see how my labor could have been profitable to anyone. I had been spinning my wheels in the sand. My heart was crushed with conviction and I sunk in despair. My doctrinal orthodoxy gave me no comfort. But then the Lord God graciously burned those words into my heart and taught me the most important thing I have ever learned.** — "**Christ is all**" flashed into my soul like a dazzling ray of light and was burned there as with a red-hot iron by the Spirit of God.



**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

**A SOLEMN VOW**

Never before or since have I made a vow to God. But in that hospital bed, I solemnly vowed to the Lord my God that if in his good providence he might be pleased to allow me to preach again, and if he would give me grace to do so, I would never again preach anything but Jesus Christ the Lord. That is the reason why I am “**determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**” It is my heart’s determination to preach all of Christ and to preach Christ always. These past 42 years I have not been turned aside from my purpose. And God helping me, I never shall be.

I thank God for what he has taught me. I confess to my shame that my own sinful pride kept me from seeing it before. You can be sure of this, sooner or later, God is going to teach you that “**Christ is all.**” Either in this life, or in the judgment, you will be taught that “**Christ is all.**” If you are one of his children, or one of his preachers, I pray that you will

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

not have to be brought to the gates of death, or worse, to learn this lesson — “**Christ is all!**”

“**Christ is all!**” — Just three, short, one syllable words, but words of such great wealth of meaning that I never hope to expound them fully. — “**Christ is all!**” — **Those three words are the essence and substance of all true Christianity.**

I have preached dozens of messages from this text, and have often used the same basic outline I will today. But, after working on Romans 13:8-10 for some time, seeking a message from the Lord for you this hour, “*Christ is all*” kept ringing in my heart. I’m confident this is the message God has given me for you, I pray he will give me the grace and power of his Spirit to deliver it. The Lord willing, we will come back to Romans 13 next week.

As I told you at the opening of our service this morning, the Lord gave us a blessed, blessed meeting in Hamilton, Ohio. The pastor, Bro. Aaron Miller, the church, and I hit it off immediately. Of course,

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

having Shelby with me always makes me much more acceptable. While we were talking about preaching one day, I said to Bro. Miller, “There is a great need for a book on homiletics, a book on preparing sermons. Spurgeon’s ‘*Lectures to My Students*’ and Martyn Lloyd-Jones’ ‘*Preaching and Preachers*’ are both excellent books every preacher ought to read. But neither really deals with sermon preparation. There is a great need for a book on sermon preparation. I don’t know of any that are really good.”

**I am not the man to write such a book; but if I were to do so, there are some things I would emphasize.**

- “No sermon ought ever be preached which does not contain the three Rs: Ruin by the Fall, Redemption by the Blood, and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost.” — *Rowland Hill*
- “*Christ is all.*” — All the message of this Book and all to be preached. — **Christ is the foundation of all true doctrine and the motive for all godliness. Christ is the message of all**

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

**true preaching and the object of all true worship.**

- Preach every sermon with urgency, presuming that the people to whom you preach are just a heartbeat from hell.

**“Christ is all!”** — That is the most important thing I ever learned. In what sense does God the Holy Spirit mean for us to understand that **“Christ is all”**? How far are we to take those words? I will be as brief as I can in preaching this message; but I want you to see clearly that...

**Proposition:** In all things concerning our souls, the knowledge of God, and the understanding of his Word, in all things relating to eternity and the glory of God **“Christ is all.”**

**THE WORKS OF GOD**

1<sup>st</sup> — **Christ is all, in all the purpose, counsels, decrees, and works of the triune God.** — **There was a time when this earth had no being,** a time

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

when there was no time, no world, no universe, no angels, and no men, a time when the triune God dwelt alone in the ineffable glory of his holy being, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. — **And where was Christ then?**

Even then Christ was with the Father, one with the Father, loved of the Father, and set up and accepted by the Triune Jehovah as our covenant Surety and sin-atonement Sacrifice, in whom all God's elect were "**accepted in the Beloved**" and blessed with all the blessings of grace.

(Proverbs 8:22-31) "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. (23) I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. (24) When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth; when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. (25) Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: (26) While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. (27) When

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

he prepared the heavens, I *was* there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: (28) When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: (29) When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: (30) Then I was by him, *as* one brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him; (31) Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men.”

(John 1:1) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

(Romans 8:28-30) “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

(Ephesians 1:3-6) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

(Revelation 13:8) “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

(Revelation 17:8) “The beast that thou sawest

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”

**Then time began, and there came a time when this earth was created.** The sun, moon, and stars, the seas and the land, and all their inhabitants, were called into being, and made out of chaos and confusion. And man was formed out of the dust of the ground. — **And where was Christ then?** What does the Book say?

(Proverbs 8:27-30) “When he prepared the heavens, I *was* there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: (28) When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: (29) When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: (30)



**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

Then I was by him, *as* one brought up *with him*: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him.”

(John 1:3) “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

(Colossians 1:16) “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”

(Hebrews 1:10) “And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.”

**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.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

Sin separated man from God and God from man. —  
**And where was Christ then?**

In that very day the Lord Jesus Christ was revealed to our trembling parents, as the only hope of salvation. The very day they fell, they were told that the woman's Seed would bruise the serpent's head, that a Savior born of a woman would crush the serpent's head and obtain eternal salvation for helpless sinners (Genesis 3:15). **Christ was held up as God's salvation in the very day of the fall.** The Lord God promised redemption and portrayed it to the fallen pair before he drove them from the Garden.

(Genesis 3:15) “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

(Genesis 3:21) “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.”

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

From that day to this, there has never been any name whereby sinners enter into heaven but Christ. He is that one to whom all who are saved look for salvation.

**Illustration:** — *Simeon (Luke 2)*

**There came a time when the world seemed sunk and buried in rebellion and sin, engrossed in thick darkness, imprisoned by idolatry, and utterly ignorant of God.** After 4,000 years the nations of the earth knew not God who made them. Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, had done nothing but spread superstition and idolatry. Poets, historians, and philosophers, had proved that, with all their intellectual powers, they had no knowledge of God and that man is utterly corrupt. — **“The world, by wisdom, knew not God”** (1 Corinthians 1:21.) Except for a few despised Jews in a small corner of the earth, the whole world was dead in ignorance and sin. — **And what did Christ do then?**

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

He left the glory he had had from all eternity with the Father and came down into the world to obtain salvation for poor sinners by the sacrifice of himself.

- He took our nature into union with himself and was born as a man.
- He did the will of God perfectly which we all had left undone.
- He suffered on the cross all the horrid 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 cleansing from 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, expecting his enemies to be made his footstool.
- And there he sits now, giving salvation to all who were given to him in eternity, interceding for all who trust him, and ruling the universe for the salvation of our souls.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

**There is a time coming when our God shall make all things new.** Creation will not always groan, being burdened. Sin shall be cast out from the world. Wickedness shall be no more. Satan shall be cast into hell. There is a day coming called “**the time of restitution of all things.**” There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. **In that day the slime of the serpent shall be eradicated from God’s creation** (Romans 8:22; Acts 3:21; 2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 9:9). — **And where will Christ be then? What will he do?**

Christ 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 the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ. 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

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

shall be an everlasting dominion. His kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. (Matthew 24:30; Revelation 9:15; Psalm 2:8; Philippians 2:10-11; Daniel 7:14).

**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 graves shall awake and come forth, and all shall be judged according to their works (Revelation 20:13; Daniel 12:2). — **And where will Christ be then?**

(Daniel 12:2) “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.”

(Revelation 20:11-15) “And **I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it,** from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. (12) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

books were opened: and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”

**Christ Himself will be the Judge.**

(Matthew 25:32) “And **before him shall be gathered all nations**: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats.”

(John 5:22) “For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

(2 Corinthians 5:10) “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.”

**Blessed be his name, in that great day, my soul shall rejoice to confess — “Christ is all!”**

- All My Righteousness!
- All My Cleansing!
- All My Hope!
- All My Plea!
- All My Confidence!
- All My Desire!

**In all the eternal purpose, counsels, decrees and works of the triune God “Christ is all.”** We will be wise to lay these things to heart. It is not written in vain, — “**He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him**” (John 5:23).

**THE WORD OF GOD**



**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

2<sup>nd</sup> — **“Christ is all” in all the Word of God.**

(Acts 10:43) “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

**Illustration:** “*Poppy, Is that where Jesus lives?*”

I have never seen a better declaration of what I want you to see than that given by **J. C. Ryle** in his sermon on this text.

“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.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

Christ is the only key that will unlock many of the sacred treasure chest of Holy Scripture. **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 use the key.**

**Illustration:** *The Rosetta Stone 1799* — A stone slab, found in 1799 near Rosetta in Northern Egypt, bearing parallel inscriptions in Greek, Egyptian hieroglyphic, and demotic characters, making it possible to read ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics.

It is **Christ crucified who was set forth in every Old Testament sacrifice.** Every animal slain and offered on God's altar, was a visible confession that a Savior was looked for who would die for sinners, a Savior who would take away man's sin by suffering as his Substitute and Sin-bearer, in the room and stead of his people (1 Peter 3:18). — It was **Christ to whom Abel looked** when he offered a better sacrifice

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

than Cain, declaring that without shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 11:4).

It was **Christ with whom Enoch walked**, and by whom he pleased God. It was **Christ of whom Enoch prophesied** in the days of abounding wickedness before the flood. — “**Behold,**” **he said,** “**the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all**” (Jude 15).

It was **Christ to whom Abraham looked** when he believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. By faith he saw Christ’s day, and was glad (John 8:56). — It was **Christ of whom he spoke in Genesis 22**, saying “**God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.**”

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 the gathering of God’s elect to him, saying, — “**The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the law-giver from between his**

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

**feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be**” (Genesis 49:10).

It was **Christ who was the substance of all the law** 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, — the sabbath days, — the commandments were all pictures, types and emblems, of Christ and his work of redemption (Hebrews 1:1; Galatians 3:24; Romans 10:4).

(Galatians 3:24) “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”

(Hebrews 10:1) “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.”

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

(Romans 10:4) “For Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

**It was Christ to whom the Lord God directed the attention of Israel by all the daily miracles he performed before their eyes in the wilderness.** The **pillar of cloud and fire** that guided them, the **manna** from heaven that fed them, the **water from the smitten rock** that followed them, all were pictures of Christ.

- Noah’s Ark
- The Brazen Serpent
- The Nazarite

**It was Christ of whom all the Judges were types.** — (Joshua and Samson). — It was **Christ of whom king David 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 the mighty conqueror. — In all these things David represented Christ.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

**It was Christ of whom all the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi spoke.** They sometimes dwelt on his sufferings, and sometimes on his glory that should follow (1 Peter 1:11). Christ dying, Christ risen, Christ exalted, Christ reigning, Christ saving was the constant message of the Old Testament prophets (Acts 10:43).

(Acts 10:43) “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.”

**It is Christ of whom the whole New Testament is speaks, too.** The Gospels are Christ living, speaking, and walking among men. The Acts of the Apostles is Christ preached, published, and proclaimed. The Epistles are Christ declared and exalted. Through the whole Book of God, from first to last, there is but one Name exalted, and that is Christ.

(Luke 24:25-27) “Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: (26) Ought not Christ to

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? (27) And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

(Luke 24:44-47) “And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me. (45) Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, (46) And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: (47) And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

**GOD’S SALVATION**

3<sup>rd</sup> — **“Christ is all” in the salvation of our souls.**  
Please, let no one here misunderstand my meaning or

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

my doctrine. I hold to and rejoice in the works of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, as well as the works of God the Son in this matter of salvation. **We are Trinitarians!** We boldly declare eternal election and predestination as sovereign works of God the Father. He chose us. He predestinated all things needful for our everlasting salvation. We insist upon the necessity of regeneration and sanctification by God the Holy Spirit. No one will ever enter into heaven without the Father's election and the Spirit's sanctification. **There is perfect harmony in the blessed Trinity.** Read the first chapter of Ephesians one more time. In the first fourteen verse of that chapter Paul tells us that our everlasting salvation was...

- Planned and Purposed by God the Father (vv. 1-6),
- Purchased by God the Son (vv. 7-12),
- Performed in us by God the Holy Ghost (vv. 13-14).



**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

Salvation, then, is the work of the triune Godhead “to the praise of the glory of his grace!” Be sure you understand that.

**Yet, it is the purpose of the triune God to glorify the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Mediator and Substitute, the Second Person of the blessed Trinity, in the redemption and salvation of his people.** I want you to see this clearly. — **It is the purpose of God that Christ be pre-eminent and glorious in the redemption and salvation of his people.**

(1 Corinthians 1:30-31) “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

**In the matter of salvation, “Christ is all!”** That is a blessed fact of divine revelation. It cannot be insisted upon too emphatically or too often. It is a fact that

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

must be known. It is essential to the gospel, essential to the souls of men, essential to salvation, and essential to the revelation of the glory of God.

**“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom”** (Psalms 111:10); and **Christ is all as our Wisdom**. If you would be wise unto salvation, you must know Christ.

- He was our wise Counselor and Advocate in the covenant of grace before the world was made (Proverbs 8:12-31).
- He is our wise Prophet who alone reveals God to us and in us (John 1:18).
- He is our wise Intercessor at the right hand of the Father (1 John 2:1-2).
- And he makes his people as wise as serpents and harmless as doves, directing us in the paths of faith and righteousness according to the will of God.

**Christ is all as our Righteousness**. In the matter of righteousness, we are totally bankrupt. We have no righteousness of our own, and no ability to produce

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

any. We are sinners. We cannot do anything good in the sight of God. In fact, even our righteousnesses are filthy rags in his eyes (Isaiah 64:6). Yet, in order for us to be saved, we must be made perfectly righteous (Matthew 5:20; Psalms 24:3-4).

- By his life of obedience to God as a man, the Lord Jesus Christ established and brought in everlasting righteousness.
- By his death at Calvary, he satisfied the justice of God for the sins of his people which were made his and imputed to him. Just as our sins were made his and imputed to him, just as he was made sin for us, every believing sinner is **“made the righteousness of God in him”** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

**Christ is all as our Sanctification, too.** All who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ were set apart in him from eternity by God’s electing love (Jude 1), set apart unto God by legal purchase through the redemptive work of Christ (Hebrews 10:10, 14), and shall be set apart and distinguished from the rest of the human race by God the Holy Spirit in

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

regeneration and conversion. In the new birth the Holy Spirit puts within us the very nature of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:9). He imparts to every chosen, redeemed sinner the very righteousness of Christ, making us “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

**Christ is all as our Redemption.** He redeemed his people from the penalty of sin by blood atonement when he died as our Substitute, paying our debt to the infinite justice of God for us (Galatians 3:13). He redeems his elect from the dominion of sin by the almighty, irresistible power of his grace in the new birth, sending his Spirit to regenerate his ransomed ones (Romans 6:22). And he shall redeem all who trust him from the very being and all the evil consequences of sin in the resurrection at the last day (Hebrews 9:28).

**All that our souls need the Lord Jesus Christ is.** All that God requires from us is in Christ. The Lord God accepts sinners as his sons by the merit of Christ his Son. Believe on Christ alone as your only, all-

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

sufficient Savior; and all that he is and has you are and have in him. God help you now to trust his dear Son.

**HEAVEN'S GLORY**

4<sup>th</sup> — One thing more and then I am done. Christ will be all in heaven. Christ is heaven's glory. I cannot say much about this because I do not yet know much about it. How can a mortal describe things unseen and a world unknown? But this I know, all who enter heaven will find that even there (Especially there!) "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 (2 Chronicles 3:4; 4: 1). So, Christ will 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 MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

**“the Lamb that was slain.”** And **“the Lamb shall be the light”** of the place (Revelation 5:6; 21:23).

- The Door Opened
- The Throne
- The Bow Around the Throne
- The Book Written
- The Lion of the Tribe of Judah
- Prevailed to Open the Book
- The Lamb Slain in the Midst of the Throne

**The praise of Christ** will be the eternal song of all the inhabitants of heaven. There we shall sing with a loud voice, in perfect harmony, — **“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever”** (Revelation 5:12-13).

**The service of Christ** will be one eternal occupation of all the inhabitants of heaven. We shall **“serve him day and night in his temple”** (Revelation 7:13) —

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

without distraction — without weariness — without sin — without end!

**The presence of Christ** will be the everlasting enjoyment of heaven. We shall “**see his face,**” and hear his voice, and speak with him as friend with friend (Revelation 22:4).

**Christ himself shall be the reward of heaven.** The glory of Glory Land will be Christ himself (Psalms 17:15).

(Psalms 17:15) “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.”

(1 John 3:1-2) “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. (2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him;

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

for we shall see him as he is.”

Take this word from God home with you now. Take to bed tonight. Think about it. Dream about it. May God give you grace to rejoice in it — “**Christ is All!**” Here is the Treasure hidden in the field of Holy Scripture. — “**Christ is All!**” Here is the Pearl of Great Price. — “**Christ is All!**” Sell all and buy it. Here is the sinner’s only hope! — “**Christ is All!**”

**You will never understand the Word of God at all, in any spiritual sense, until you realize that in this blessed Book Christ is all!** — The Bible is a Book about redemption, and Christ is the Redeemer! I repeat — Christ is the Key that unlocks this Treasure Chest!

**If you seek to know the living God,** you will make no progress until you are convinced beyond a doubt that “*Christ is all.*”



**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

**If you seek the pardon and forgiveness of sin, if you seek justification before God,** if you seek peace and reconciliation with the Almighty, you will make no progress until you are made to know, without question, that in the business of redemption and salvation “*Christ is all and in all.*”

**If you would be sanctified and made holy before God,** in his sight and in his presence, you will make not progress toward that goal until you are made to realize that in the matter of true holiness and sanctification “*Christ is all and in all.*”

**If you would live forever with God in the eternal kingdom of heaven,** you must be made to realize that that blessed estate is in Christ! In heaven “*Christ is all and in all!*”

If “*Christ is all*” in all the purpose and work of God — If “*Christ is all*” in God’s salvation — If “*Christ is all*” in all the Bool of God — If “*Christ is all*” in heaven’s everlasting glory — Then **“Christ is all” to be preached** (1 Corinthians 2:16).

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

- For the Salvation of Sinners!
- For the Edification of Saints!
- For the Comfort of Believers!
- For Inspiration and Devotion!
- For Reproof and Correction!
- For Doctrine and Instruction!
- For Godliness and Consecration!

**“CHRIST IS ALL!”**

It is not possible for any mortal to comprehend the full scope of those three words, but here are ten statements that might help to enlarge our understanding of them.

1. **Christ is all to be known** (John 17:3; Philippians 3:10). If you know Christ you know enough, even if you are ignorant of other things. If you do not know Christ it is nothing to have all other knowledge.

2. **Christ is all to be chosen** (Matthew 13:44-46). There is no way to obtain this treasure and purchase

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

this Pearl, but by selling all that you have. If you would save your life, you must lose it to Christ.

3. **Christ is all to be trusted** (John 3:36). His blood is atonement. His righteousness is acceptance with God. His advocacy is our assurance. His grace is preservation. His providence is our provision.

4. **Christ is all to be loved** (Luke 14:26). All other loves must be burned upon this altar, so that nothing and no one comes between my heart and my Savior.

5. **Christ is all to be desired** (Isaiah 26:8). Seek Christ to the exclusion of all else, and you will find everything you need in him, supplied from his fulness.

6. **Christ is all our joy** (Philippians 3:3). If a person has that which he desires above all else, he rejoices in it, and all who know Christ rejoice in him.

7. **Christ is all to consume our thoughts** (Philippians 4:6-8). If you must think of other things,

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

think not on them. Think on Christ and think of all things in the light of the knowledge of him.

8. **Christ is all to be followed** (John 13:15). The rebel must be ruled by law. The mercenary is motivated by reward. The believer is ruled by love. “*The love of Christ constraineth us.*”

9. **Christ is all in the house of God** (Colossians 3:11). In preaching, praise, and prayer, “**Christ is all!**” He is all our beauty, all our attraction, and all our entertainment. All our activities serve him. All our ordinances remember him and proclaim allegiance to him.

10. **Christ is all our hope before God** (1 Timothy 1:1). His obedience is the basis of our hope, his coming its fulfilment, his presence its satisfaction, and his likeness its consummation. — “**Christ is all!**”

**Illustration:** *Happy Jack*

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING**  
**I EVER LEARNED**

Will you keep to this, or will you abandon it for something else?

(2 Timothy 1:13-14) “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. (14) That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.”

Amen.