

Beyond all this Paul's epistles are virtual sermons, and best to be understood as such. And then—what was perhaps least to have been expected, and what also perhaps is least likely to have been duly considered by the ordinary reader of the New Testament—those epistles contain not only hints, but explicit statements, of the highest value for our purpose in understanding aright and intimately the true matter, method, spirit, and aim of this greatest of merely human preachers.

Let us go at once to an inestimably valuable statement of the kind now indicated. Paul had one master thought and feeling—thought fused in feeling, let us call it—which was ascendant and dominant in his preaching; as it was also in his life. That thought and feeling, that passion of both mind and heart, nay, of conscience and of will no less—for the whole being of Paul was one flame herein—what else was it, what else could it be, but consuming zeal to have the lordship of Christ universally acknowledged by men? The apostle's own personal experience made it impossible that this should not be so. And the evidence of the fact that it was so he has waterlined ineffaceably into the tissue and fabric of his writing. But we are not left to such mere inference, however overwhelmingly strong. Paul has put it into express record and testimony. He says of himself as preacher, "We [I] preach . . . Christ Jesus as Lord."

One is not to read these words without attaching to them their own just and definite meaning. They mean precisely what they say. Paul in them was fixing, in permanent unchangeable phrase, a statement from which all generations following might know, first, what it was that he preached—it was Christ Jesus; and, second, how he preached Christ Jesus—it was as Lord. Not, observe, as Savior; not as Teacher; not as Example; much less, as Friend, as Brother. Paul preached Christ Jesus as Lord.

We have thus at once reached what is most central and most regulative in the principle and practise of Paul as preacher—the fact, the threefold fact, first, that he preached a person; second, that that person was Christ; and third, that the aspect or relation in which he preached Christ was the aspect or relation of lordship to men. But are we not staking too much upon a single text? Let us see. When at Philippi the frightened and penitent jailer cried out his question, "What must I do to be saved?" how did Paul reply? "Believe on the Lord Jesus." Consider what that reply imports. It requires faith. Yes. It requires faith in a person. Yes. That person is Jesus Christ. Yes. Faith in Jesus Christ as—what? Savior? No. The jailer's inquiry indeed was for the conditions of salvation. Yes, but the reply did not direct him, in terms, to a Savior. It directed him to a Lord. "Take Jesus Christ for your Lord, and you will be saved"—that is what in effect it said. Jesus Christ is a Savior to any man that takes him for Lord.

As thus to sinners repenting, so likewise to Christians, Paul