

March 17, 1987

Paul's Threefold Ambition

This morning I would like to speak on Paul's threefold ambition. I will base this upon Phil. 3:10 (reading the parts that are relevant) I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his suffering.

We all want to learn about Christ. We should. We want to learn about the Bible. We should. I remember when I was a boy up in N. Michigan I used to go to the YMCA there for some exercise. There were certain days when they finished that, they would have all the boys come upstairs and would give them a talk about the Bible. These talks consisted in trying to trace on the map exactly where Paul went on his missionary journeys. They would trace it and tell that he went to this place and to that place, etc. It was quite interesting geographically, but as far as leading anyone to know anything about Christ or to learn to follow Him it was very disappointing. We knew a lot of facts and I hope you will learn a great many here, but all the facts you learn are absolutely useless if you don't learn what is behind the facts. Paul said, I want to know Christ.

In the first place, of course, we have to know that we are saved through Him. After I got my M.A. I went to the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, for a year, and I am very glad I had that experience. It made my Christian faith more vivid, more living and gave me something that has remained with me ever since. There we used to have very fine messages given in the chapel services. I used to notice that some of these messages were so very thrilling that when they would give an invitation many would go forward and the same people would go forward time after time. Fellows whom I had seen on street meetings preaching the Word of Christ with courage and deep conviction, would come forward and turn to the group and say "I was never saved before, I never really knew Christ but now I have. I began to think, Did I really know Christ? I believed I had been a Christian for many years. I could not tell any stories of sudden conversion. I could not tell any story of a great conversion experience. and it bothered me. One night I said, O Lord, I believe I have known Christ for many years. I believe I have been saved through Him. But if I have never been saved before, I now receive Him as my Saviour. I have never been bothered by that since that time. I know that I am saved, and I think it is very important that each of us make sure we have taken that initial step. It is shocking how many people there are who have gone through fine Christian courses and have started out to serve the Lord and then have fallen into sin in such a way that one wonders if they ever really knew Christ.

This is most important. Paul said, I want to know Christ. It is very important that we are sure that we actually know Him. We have not merely heard about him and know facts about Him but that we know Him.

About 500 years ago Martin Luther began giving wonderful salvation messages. His enemies attacked him and he was called to appear before the emperor. Luther had been a peasant boy. In Germany at that time the distance between the peasants and the next class and the next class and the next and the next until you got up to the dukes, and above them the kings and above them was the emperor, was something that was very real. This former peasant boy, now a professor in a university, now a great learned mind, still looked upon as of the peasant class and filled with those feelings of inferiority that that sort of upbringing brought was taken to the town of Wormes to stand before the emperor. There he was called to stand before the emperor and he came forward and there were the kings and the dukes from all the parts of Germany. There was the young emperor Charles the first sitting in his great splendor. The spokesman turned to Luther and said, See this table. Are these books yours? Luther said, Yes. They said Martin Luther are you ready to recant these books? Luther said, Will you give me time to think about it? They said, Luther you have been all this (time of the) trip to come here and you surely knew you would be asked this. Are you ready to recant these books? Luther said, Give me time to think about it. The young emperor, Charles I, turned to the fellow next