

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
KNOWING AND EXPERIENCING CHRIST
AS REVEALED IN PHILIPPIANS**

Message One

Gaining Christ—the Goal of the Believers' Pursuit of Christ

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:4-14

I. In Philippians 3:3-16 Christ is presented as the goal of the believers' pursuit:

- A. For Christ to be our goal means that He is the highest enjoyment.
- B. Our goal is the all-inclusive Christ as the prize to be awarded to us; when we reach the goal, the goal will immediately become the prize—v. 14.
- C. Paul's pursuit was toward one goal, one aim—Christ; he took Christ as his goal, pursuing to obtain the prize to which God in Christ Jesus had called him upward—vv. 12-14
- D. Since our goal is to gain Christ, we should forsake all other things and pursue nothing but Christ—vv. 7-8.

II. On account of (or because of) the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Paul counted all things to be loss—v. 8a:

- A. Paul placed great value on the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; this is indicated by the words *my Lord*, which convey his intimate, tender feelings concerning Christ.
- B. Paul's eyes were opened to see the excellency of the wonderful, all-inclusive Christ; on account of this excellency, he counted as loss all things, whether they related to religious gain or natural gain.
- C. In verse 8 *all things* indicates that Paul dropped not only religious things but all things on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; thus, to Paul, the loss of all things was the loss of everything.
- D. The more we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, the more we will count as loss everything religious and natural—vv. 4-8a.

III. On account of Christ, Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them as refuse in order to gain Christ—vv. 7, 8b:

- A. *All things* in verse 8 includes the things of religion, philosophy, and culture; Paul suffered the loss of all these things because they were substitutes for Christ, hooks used by Satan to keep people from Christ and the experience of Christ.
- B. We gain Christ by suffering the loss of all things that were once a gain for us and by counting them as refuse—vv. 4, 8:
 - 1. The Greek word for *gain* in verse 8 means “to secure, to obtain, to lay hold of.”
 - 2. Christ is the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 2:9) and the reality of the shadows of all positive things (vv. 16-17).
 - 3. To gain Christ is to experience, enjoy, and take possession of all His unsearchable riches—Eph. 3:8.

4. Like Paul, we should not only count all things as loss on account of Christ (Phil. 3:7) but also suffer the loss of all things and count all things as refuse (v. 8).
5. The more we suffer the loss of all things and count them as refuse on account of Christ, the more we will gain Christ for our experience and enjoyment—vv. 7-8.

Message Two

**Being Found in Christ,
Knowing Christ, and Pursuing Christ**

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:9-14

I. Paul's desire was to be found in Christ, not having his own righteousness but "that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith"—Phil. 3:9:

- A. Deep within Paul was the aspiration to have his whole being immersed in and saturated with Christ so that all who observed him might find him fully in Christ; we also should have the earnest desire to be found in Christ—v. 9a.
- B. Paul wanted to be found in Christ in the condition of not having his own righteousness but the righteousness of God, taking Christ as his subjective, lived-out righteousness—v. 9:
 - 1. There are two aspects of Christ being righteousness to the believers:
 - a. The first aspect is Christ being the believers' righteousness for them to be justified by God objectively—Rom. 3:24-26; Acts 13:39; Gal. 3:24b.
 - b. The second aspect is Christ being the believers' righteousness lived out of them as the manifestation of God, who is the righteousness in Christ given to the believers for them to be justified subjectively—Rom. 4:25; 1 Pet. 2:24a; James 2:24; Matt. 5:20; Rev. 19:8.
 - 2. The subjective righteousness of God in Philippians 3:9 is actually God Himself becoming our daily living, a living that is right with God and man:
 - a. Paul did not want to live in his own righteousness, the righteousness that comes from man's own effort to keep the law—vv. 6, 9.
 - b. Paul desired to live in the righteousness of God and to be found in the condition of expressing God by living Christ; if we would be found in Christ, we must be in such a condition—1:20-21a.
- C. Faith is the basis, the condition, on which we receive and possess the righteousness that is out of God, which is Christ—3:9; 1 Cor. 1:30.

II. Paul lived in a condition of having not his own righteousness but the righteousness that is out of God in order to know (experience) Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, to be conformed to His death, and to attain to the out-resurrection—Phil. 3:10-11:

- A. To have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ (v. 8) is by revelation, but to know Christ (v. 10) is by experience—to have an experiential knowledge of Him:
 - 1. To experience Christ is to know and enjoy Christ in an experiential way—2:17-18; 4:4, 10.
 - 2. To know Christ is not merely to have the knowledge of Him but to gain His person—2 Cor. 2:10.
 - 3. To gain Christ is to experience, enjoy, and take possession of all His unsearchable riches by paying a price—Phil. 3:8; Eph. 3:8.
 - 4. We need to know Christ by experiencing Him, enjoying Him, being one with Him, and having Him live within us; in this way we know Him by both revelation and experience—Phil. 3:10; 1 Cor. 6:17; Gal. 2:20.

B. Paul aspired to know the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings—Phil. 3:10:

1. The power of Christ's resurrection is His resurrection life, which raised Him from the dead—Eph. 1:19-20:
 - a. The Spirit is the reality of Christ's resurrection and its power—Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 John 5:6.
 - b. The Spirit compounded with Christ's resurrection and its power indwells our spirit to dispense Christ's resurrection and its power into our entire being—Phil. 1:19; Exo. 30:23-25; Rom. 8:6b, 10-11.
 - c. If we put ourselves aside and remain under the death of the cross, we will experience the power of Christ's resurrection, and spontaneously, the power of resurrection experienced by us will build up the Body—Phil. 3:10; Eph. 4:12, 16.
2. The expression *the fellowship of His sufferings* in Philippians 3:10 refers to the participation in Christ's sufferings, a necessary condition for the experience of the power of His resurrection—Matt. 20:22-23; Col. 1:24:
 - a. We first experience the power of Christ's resurrection, and then by this power we are enabled to participate in His sufferings—Phil. 3:10.
 - b. These sufferings are mainly for Christ's Body, the church—Col. 1:24.

C. Philippians 3:10 also speaks of “being conformed to His death”; this indicates that Paul desired to take Christ's death as the mold of his life:

1. Being conformed to Christ's death is the base of the experience of Christ—1:20-21a; 3:9-10.
2. The mold of Christ's death refers to Christ's continually putting to death His natural life so that He might live by the life of God—John 6:57a.
3. By being conformed to Christ's death, we experience Christ in His death for the release, impartation, and multiplication of life, and we also glorify the Father—12:24-26, 28; 13:31; 2 Cor. 4:12.

D. The result of being conformed to Christ's death is that we attain to the out-resurrection from the dead, which will be a prize to the overcomers—Phil. 3:11:

1. To attain to, to arrive at, the out-resurrection means that our entire being is gradually and continually resurrected—1 Thes. 5:23.
2. The out-resurrection is a resurrection out of the old creation into the new creation—2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15.

III. Like Paul, we should pursue Christ Himself and “pursue toward the goal for the prize”—Phil. 3:12, 14a:

- A. In order to pursue Christ, we should not think that we have attained, and we should forget the things which are behind and stretch “forward to the things which are before”—vv. 12-13.
- B. The goal toward which we are pursuing is the full enjoyment and gaining of Christ, and the prize is the uttermost enjoyment of Christ in the millennial kingdom as a reward to the victorious runners of the New Testament race—v. 14; 1 Cor. 9:24; Heb. 10:35; 11:26; 12:1-2.

Message Three

Knowing Christ and the Power of His Resurrection

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10; John 11:25; 20:22; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 1:9

I. Paul aspired to know Christ—Phil. 3:10:

- A. To have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ in Philippians 3:8 is by revelation, but to know Him in verse 10 is by experience.
- B. Paul first received the revelation of Christ, then sought the experience of Christ—to know and enjoy Christ in an experiential way.
- C. *The one thing* in the book of Philippians is the subjective knowledge and experience of Christ—2:2; cf. 1:20-21; 2:5; 3:7-9; 4:12-13.
- D. To know Christ is not merely to have the knowledge concerning Him but to gain His very person—2 Cor. 2:10; cf. Col. 2:9, 16-17:
 - 1. To gain something requires the paying of a price; to gain Christ is to experience, enjoy, and take possession of all His unsearchable riches (Eph. 3:8) by paying a price.
 - 2. Christ has gained us, taken possession of us, that we might gain Him, take possession of Him—Phil. 3:12.
 - 3. The Christian life is a life of gaining Christ in His full ministry in His three divine and mystical stages—incarnation, inclusion, and intensification—John 1:14; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Rev. 1:4; 4:5; 5:6:
 - a. Even though Paul had experienced and gained Christ tremendously, he did not consider that he had experienced Him in full or gained Him to the uttermost; for this reason he was still advancing toward the goal—the gaining of Christ to the fullest extent—Phil. 3:12-14.
 - b. In order to gain Christ to the fullest extent, Paul not only forsook his experiences in Judaism but also would not linger in his past experiences of Christ and be limited by them; he forgot the past—v. 13.
 - c. Not to forget but to linger in our past experiences, however genuine they were, frustrates our further pursuing of Christ—v. 13; Heb. 6:1a.
 - d. Christ is unsearchably rich, and there is a vast territory of His riches to be possessed; Paul was stretching out to reach the farthest extent of this territory—Phil. 3:13.

II. Paul aspired to know the power of Christ's resurrection—v. 10:

- A. The power of Christ's resurrection is His resurrection life, which raised Him from the dead—Eph. 1:19-20.
- B. The Spirit is the reality of Christ's resurrection and its power—Rom. 8:9-11; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 1 John 5:6.
- C. The Spirit compounded with Christ's resurrection and its power (Phil. 1:19; Exo. 30:23-25) indwells our spirit (Rom. 8:10-11) to dispense Christ's resurrection and its power not only to our spirit and soul (vv. 6b, 10) but also to our mortal body (vv. 11, 13b; 2 Cor. 4:11).
- D. We should cooperate with the resurrecting Spirit to recognize that we have been resurrected with Christ (Col. 2:12; Eph. 2:6a) and to pursue the power of the resurrection of Christ:

1. It is by this power of Christ's resurrection that we, the lovers of Christ, determine to take the cross by denying our self—Matt. 16:24; cf. S. S. 2:8-9.
2. It is also by this power of resurrection that we, the lovers of Christ, are enabled to be conformed to His death, to be one with His cross—Phil. 3:10; cf. S. S. 2:14-15.
3. In order to experience the life-giving Spirit as the reality of the flourishing riches of the resurrection of Christ, we have to discern our spirit from our soul—Heb. 4:12; cf. S. S. 2:14-15.

Message Four

Attaining to the Out-resurrection

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:10-14

- I. The result of being conformed to Christ's death is that we may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead—Phil. 3:11.**
- II. To attain to the out-resurrection is to arrive at the out-resurrection; this requires us to triumphantly run the race for the prize—1 Cor. 9:24-26; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Heb. 12:1-2.**
- III. The out-resurrection is the outstanding resurrection, the extra-resurrection, which will be a prize to the overcoming saints—Rev. 20:4, 6:**
 - A. All believers who are dead in Christ will participate in the resurrection from the dead at the Lord's coming back—1 Thes. 4:16; 1 Cor. 15:52.
 - B. The Lord's overcomers will enjoy an extra, outstanding portion of that resurrection, a resurrection in which they will receive the reward of the kingdom; this is what the apostle Paul sought after—Heb. 11:35, 26.
 - C. The out-resurrection should be the goal and destination of our Christian life—Phil. 3:11-15a.
- IV. To arrive at the out-resurrection indicates that our entire being is gradually and continually resurrected—1 Thes. 5:23:**
 - A. God first resurrected our deadened spirit; He proceeds to resurrect our soul and our mortal body until our whole being—spirit, soul, and body—is fully resurrected out of our old being by His life and with His life—Eph. 2:5-6; Rom. 8:6, 11.
 - B. This is a process in life through which we must pass and a race that we must run until we arrive at the out-resurrection as the prize—Phil. 3:11-14
 - C. If we are conformed to Christ's death, every part of our being will be gradually resurrected; thus, the Christian life is a process of resurrection.
 - D. We can reach this goal only by being conformed to the death of Christ by living a crucified life—v. 11; Gal. 2:20.
 - E. In the death of Christ we are processed from the old creation to the new—Phil. 3:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:17.
- V. The out-resurrection is a resurrection out of the old creation into the new creation—Gal. 6:15; 2 Cor. 5:17:**
 - A. To be in the out-resurrection means to leave everything of the old creation and to be brought into God.
 - B. In the out-resurrection there is no element of the old creation; instead, everything is full of the divine element—Rev. 21:5a.
- VI. For Paul to live was Christ as the out-resurrection—Phil. 1:21a; 3:11:**
 - A. The out-resurrection is actually the dear, precious, excellent person of Christ, the One who, through crucifixion and resurrection, has passed out of the old creation and has entered into God—John 14:3, 20; Heb. 6:19-20.

- B. The Christ whom we should live is Himself the out-resurrection—Phil. 1:21a; 3:11; John 11:25.

VII. In Philippians 3:12 Paul had already obtained the believers' common salvation by the believers' common faith, but he had not obtained the extra portion of resurrection:

- A. To obtain that portion he had to pursue, to run, and to finish the course triumphantly—2 Tim. 4:7-8.
- B. The Greek word for *pursue* in Philippians 3:12 is the same word as for *persecute*; this word also means *to press forward, to follow after*:
1. In such a way Paul ran the race to obtain the prize and reach maturity.
 2. Before he was saved, he persecuted Christ; after he was saved, he pursued Christ to such an extent that he persecuted Christ, but in a positive way.

VIII. We need to be conformed to Christ's death so that by any means we may attain to the out-resurrection from the dead; this is the only way for the Lord to go on in His recovery, the only way for the Lord to build up His church, the only way to prepare the bride, and the only way to bring the Lord back—Phil. 3:10-11; Matt. 16:18; Rev. 19:7-9a; 22:14, 20.