

To Be Found In Christ

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:8-9

PAUL'S ASPIRATION

Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them to be refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. Furthermore, Paul's desire was to be found in Christ in the condition of having the righteousness which is of God based on faith, not of having his own righteousness. (**vv.8-9**) Paul's earnest desire was to be found (observed, seen, or discovered by others) in Christ. In the past Paul was fully in the Jewish religion under the law and was always found by others in the law. Whenever someone met Paul, that person found Paul in the law and enveloped by the law, a person altogether encased by the law, fully boxed in by it. He was living by the law, with the law, and under the law.

But at his conversion he was transferred from the law and his former religion into Christ, and he became "a man in Christ" (**2Cor.12:2**). Henceforth, whenever others saw him or observed him, they could tell that he had become a person in Christ. Paul was not in culture, philosophy, or religion. He was a person who lived in Christ, and his aspiration and expectation were that he would be found by others (the Jews, the angels, and the demons) in Christ. He aspired to have his whole being immersed in Christ and saturated with Christ so that all who observed him could discover him in Christ. Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them refuse in order to gain Christ on the one hand and to be found in Him on the other.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD BASED ON FAITH

In verse 9 Paul speaks in a very definite way of the condition in which he desired to be found, i.e., in Christ. He says that he did not want to have his own righteousness, but he wanted the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God based on faith. To be found in such a transcendent condition, expressing God by living Christ, not by keeping the law, was his desire. Before Paul was saved, he had no idea that Christ could be his righteousness. Paul lived in that righteousness which was according to the law. But now Paul's desire was to be observed as a person living in Christ and having Christ as his righteousness.

The righteousness in which Paul wanted to be found was the righteousness "which is through the faith of Christ" which is Christ Himself infused into us through our appreciation of Him, who becomes our faith in Him. And knowing that a man is not justified out of works of law, but through faith in Jesus Christ." (**Gal.2:16**) Faith in Jesus Christ (lit., faith *of* Jesus Christ) denotes an organic union with Him through believing. This is related to the believers' appreciation of the person of the Son of God as the most precious One. The believers are infused with the preciousness of Christ through the gospel preached to them. This Christ becomes in them the faith by which they believe and the capacity to believe through their appreciation of Him. This faith creates an organic union in which they and Christ are one. This faith of Christ brings us into an organic union with Him. By this union, we enter into a righteousness which is God Himself lived out of us. Faith is the basis, the condition, for us to receive and possess the righteousness out from God, the highest righteousness, which is Christ (**1Cor.1:30**).

A VISION OF THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

It is one thing to have a doctrinal understanding of being found in Christ; it is quite another thing to be found in Christ in our daily living. In whatever realm we live, that is where we shall be seen, observed, and discovered by others. When Paul was still living by the law, he was found in the law. But one day he began to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He saw the vision that Christ must be his everything: love, kindness, humility, wisdom, patience, intention, attitude, and even his words, utterances, and expressions. On account of this excellency of the knowledge of Christ, he was willing to count all things to be loss. Furthermore, he suffered the loss of all things and counted them refuse in order to gain Christ and be found in Him.

We need to have a vision of the preciousness of Christ. Then we need to gain the very Christ we have seen. To know Christ is not merely to have the knowledge concerning Him, but to gain His very Person. Christ is the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead (**Col. 2:9**) and the reality of the shadows of all

positive things (**Col. 2:16-17**). To gain Him is to experience, enjoy, and take possession of all His unsearchable riches (**Eph. 3:8**). As we gain Christ, we should also live in Him and become those who are in Him in experience. Then when others see us or observe us, they will find us in Christ. We shall not be found in our own virtues—we shall be found in Christ and in Him alone. Only when we are found in Christ will the Lord be satisfied.

THE SIX-THOUSAND-YEAR TRADITION

When Paul wrote Philippians 3, deep within him was the realization that the traditional forms of human living occupy everyone. Whether a person is sinful or not sinful, moral or immoral, that person is occupied by something other than Christ, by some element of the thousands of years of human history. We may call this the six-thousand-year human tradition. Satan, the subtle one, is lurking behind the six-thousand-year human tradition. Due to his influence, we live in this tradition instead of in Christ. With the exception of Paul, hardly anyone has ever touched this powerful stronghold. No matter how spiritual we may be, others rarely find us in Christ. Rather, they find us in something other than Christ, in some aspect of man's six thousand years of traditional living. During times of prayer, we may be released temporarily from this tradition. But even in the prayers of the saints it is sometimes possible to sense the flavor of the six-thousand-year tradition. What a serious situation this is!

If we would be found in Christ instead of in the thousands of years of tradition, we must be willing to forget our past, even our past Christian life, humble ourselves before the Lord, and ask Him to have mercy on us. In the Lord's recovery we have come to the place where we are facing a huge rock standing in our way. For many of us, there seems to be no way to go on. Furthermore, many of us have come to a stage where it seems difficult for even the Lord to get through in us. This is very much related to the fact that when others see us, it is very probable that they will find us in something other than Christ.

The book of Philippians was written by Paul in his later ministry, not long before he was to depart from this earth, when he was quite mature. Nevertheless, he still did not have the assurance that he would be found by others in Christ. If we would be found in Christ, we need to be watchful moment by moment, continually on the alert to live in Christ. If we are not alert, we shall immediately be distracted from Christ and live in something other than Christ. Our living may be very good, but in our experience we are not in Christ.

OUR UNIQUE EXPRESSION & THE STANDARD OF GOD'S SALVATION

We need to consider seriously before the Lord just where we are right now. Are we in Christ? As the angels and demons observe us, do they find us in Christ? When others meet us, where do they find us—in Christ or in some good thing that is not Christ Himself? Paul's word about being found in Christ is of great significance. Deep within Paul was the aspiration to be found in Christ. May we all aspire to be found in Christ. We need to pray, "Lord, my desire is to be found in You. In everything I do day by day, I want to be found in You." Let us pray that we may be found in Christ by our wife or husband, by our children and relatives, and by our neighbors, colleagues, and classmates. If we are truly found in Christ, all other things will lose their hold on us. We shall no longer be under the influence of religion, philosophy, or culture.

To be found in Christ means that He is our unique expression. Because Paul could be found in Christ, Christ was his expression. In every aspect and from every angle, only Christ could be seen upon him. Paul's aspiration was that Christ would be his only expression. He did not want to be found in such natural virtues as humility, patience, and love. These were among the things that he counted refuse, trash, in order to gain Christ and be found in Him. Culture, human patience, natural love, and submission—all are refuse when compared to Christ. We should not aspire to be found in our own love for others or in our natural submission. Our earnest desire should be to be found only in Christ.

If we see the high standard of God's salvation, we shall realize how desperately we need God's mercy. We are far below His standard, for people can find us in many good things other than Christ. Satan, God's enemy, uses religion, philosophy, or culture as a means to occupy us, to frustrate us, and to keep us from the higher and richer experience of Christ. For this reason, in Philippians, a book on the experience of Christ according to God's high standard, Paul expresses the aspiration that we would experience Christ to such an extent that we may be found in Him. May the Lord grant us mercy that we may be found in Him!