

## To Know Christ, the Power of His Resurrection and the Fellowship of His Sufferings

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:8-11; Eph. 1:19-20; Rom. 1:4; Matt. 20:22-23; Col. 1:24; 2 Tim. 2:11

### REVELATION AND EXPERIENCE

To know, i.e., to experience Christ is a result of being found in Him. According to Paul's concept, if we would know Christ, we must first be found in Him. Moreover, to be found in Him requires that we count all things loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and then suffer the loss of all things and count them to be refuse. Only when we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, a vision of the supreme preciousness and surpassing worth of Christ, shall we be willing to let go of everything else and count those things as refuse. Then we shall gain Christ and be found in Him. We shall be those who live in Christ and who are found by others in Christ. Being found in Him, we shall surely know Him.

Paul lived in a condition of not having his own righteousness but having the righteousness of God, in order to know (to experience) Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. To have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ in verse 8 is **by revelation**. But to know Him in verse 10 is **by experience**—to have the experiential knowledge of Him, to experience Him in the full knowledge of Him. Paul first received the revelation of Christ and then sought for the experience of Christ—to know and enjoy Him in an experiential way. To gain Christ is one thing, and to experience Him is another. Paul first received the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, then he paid the price to gain Christ and be found in Him, and finally he experienced Christ and enjoyed Him.

### A HIGHER KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AND OUR SHORTAGE IN LIVING CHRIST

Our experience of Christ can never surpass the excellency of our knowledge of Christ. Rather, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ always exceeds our experience of Christ. If we do not have a higher knowledge of Christ, we cannot have a higher experience of Christ. This is why it is very important that we not be limited by our past knowledge of Christ. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ will attract us to Christ and motivate us to lay aside everything other than Him. If we see the surpassing worth of Christ, we shall be willing to count as loss not only worldly, material things, but even our culture, religion, and philosophy.

Our daily living is an indication of **what we are** and **where we are** concerning the experience of Christ. When we are in the church meetings or with the saints, we may have a lot to say about Christ. But in our daily life we may live in our national philosophy, domestic logic, or family concept. Surely, we have come to know that the Lord is the all-inclusive Spirit and that we are one spirit with Him and yet, in our daily life, much of the time we do not live one spirit with the Lord. Instead, we often live in our culture. A critical situation definitely exists among many of us today. Yes, we have seen the vision that Christ is our life, that He is the life-giving Spirit, and that we are one spirit with Him, and we talk a great deal about Christ. However, in our practical life day by day, we do not live Christ every moment. We are not found by others in Christ continually.

### EXPERIENCING CHRIST IN THE POWER OF RESURRECTION

Paul aspired not only to know Christ, but also to know the power of Christ's resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. The **power** of Christ's resurrection is His resurrection life which raised Him from among the dead (**Eph. 1:19-20**). The **reality of the power** of Christ's

resurrection is the Spirit (**Rom. 1:4**). To know, to experience, this power requires identification with Christ's death and conformity to it. To experience the power of Christ's resurrection, we need to live a crucified life according to the pattern of His life. Our conformity to His death affords a base for the power of His resurrection to rise up that His divine life may be expressed in us. The participation in Christ's suffering—"the fellowship of His sufferings"—(**Matt. 20:22-23; Col. 1:24**) is a necessary condition for the experience of the power of His resurrection (**2 Tim. 2:11**) by being conformed to His death.

1. With Christ, the sufferings and death came first, followed by the resurrection. With us, the power of His resurrection comes first, then the fellowship of His sufferings and conformity to His death. We first receive the power of His resurrection. Then by this power we are enabled to participate in His sufferings and live a crucified life in conformity to His death. Such sufferings are mainly for producing and building up the Body of Christ. (**Col. 1:24**) Being conformed to Christ's death is the very base of the experience of Christ. If we are not conformed to the death of Christ, we do not have the base for the experience of Christ. By participating in Christ's sufferings, we are ushered into a position to experience the power of His resurrection. Then, when we experience the power of Christ's resurrection, we know Him.
2. In Philippians 3, according to Paul's sequence, first we receive the excellency of the knowledge of Christ by seeing the vision of Christ; second, we count all things to be refuse; third, we gain Christ and are found in Him; and fourth, we know Christ, experience Him. In order to experience Christ, we must be in the power of resurrection. We cannot be in our natural life. The more we know the power of Christ's resurrection, the more we shall participate in the sufferings of Christ and thereby have the fellowship of His sufferings. If we experience the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we shall then be conformed to His death. As we are conformed to the death of Christ, we are ushered into the power of His resurrection. It is by this resurrection power that we know Christ and experience Him.

## THE CRUCIAL NEED FOR A VISION OF CHRIST

It is crucial that we see a vision of Christ and thereby receive the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. According to Colossians, Christ is the portion of the saints, the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation, the Head of the Body, and the Firstborn from among the dead. In Colossians we have a revelation of the all-inclusive and all-extensive Christ. If we have gained the excellency of the knowledge of Christ from Colossians, we shall be able to testify not only that Christ is peace and joy, but that He is the portion of the saints, the mystery of God, and the embodiment of the fullness of the Godhead. Yes, the book of Colossians does reveal that Christ is our peace. But in this book peace is not revealed in an ordinary way. Rather, in Colossians 3:15 we see that the peace of Christ arbitrates in our hearts. To know that Christ is the arbitrating peace in our hearts requires the excellency of the knowledge concerning Him.

In Philippians 3 Paul uses a number of extraordinary expressions. He speaks of gaining Christ and being found in Him; of knowing Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of Christ's sufferings; and of being conformed to His death. First, we need to see all these matters. Then **we need to pray that the Lord would grant us the grace to experience Him**. To know Christ in all these aspects is truly to experience Him and enjoy Him. We need to enjoy the fellowship of Christ's sufferings that we may be conformed to His death and know the power of His resurrection. For this, we need to forget the things which are behind and stretch forward to the things which are before (**v.13**). May we all forget the things behind and go on to something higher, deeper, and more profound concerning Christ.