

BEING OCCUPIED WITH CHRIST
Colossians 2:3,9; Philippians 3:8,10

Paul gives this meaning in Acts 9, when he calls Christ "Lord," and we then find him preaching in the synagogue that Jesus is the Christ, and the Son of God. He is next seen in preaching Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2); that for him to live is Christ (Philippians 1:21); and that Christ is the Head of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:21-23).

In the life of Paul the apostle, Christ was the all-absorbing Object, the Object of his faith and love. Christ was the One who had won his heart, upon whom his faith fed, and the One for whom he would spend and be spent to know. It takes discipline to come away from the things and thoughts of the world and spend time at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary knew what it took and reaped the reward. "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:42). In this restless age, sitting at the feet of the Word of God, is a lost art. There is much service and no occupation with the Son of God. In the energy of the flesh many are looking after the vineyards of others, but have not kept their own (Song of Solomon 1:6).

Paul knew the value of it also, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:8). He also found in his heart the cry, "That I may know him, . . ." (Philippians 3:10). Paul was in the position and privilege of writing the Scriptures, but we have the completed Word. So if we will be occupied with Christ, we must, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). The believers in Berea, " . . . searched the scriptures daily, . . ." (Acts 17:11).

Paul writing to the saints at Colosse and speaking of Christ says, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," and "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:3,9). "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me" (Psalm 40:7). It is in the Scriptures that He is fully revealed. In Him all its teachings center. In Him all its precepts are perfectly fulfilled. In Him all its promises are kept. In Him all its prophecies are fulfilled. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of the written Word. Jesus Christ is the first recorded name in the N.T. (Matthew 1:1), and the last name recorded (Revelation 22:21), and the O.T. is filled with foreshadowings and prophecies of Him.

We must have the Scriptures before we can have Christ. It is the written Word that takes us to the living Word. Where the Word of God has not gone, Christ is unknown. While we believe in an unseen Christ, we do not trust in an unknown Christ, but through the testimony of Scripture we say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12). As believers we love not an unknown Christ and we do not trust in One with whom we are not acquainted.

Christ is the Head of the Body and we are desirous of growing up into Him in all things (Ephesians 4:15). Being one with Him in the Body, He is the Source of our power (Ephesians 6:10; Philippians 4:13; Colossians 2:15). Christ now seated at the right hand of the Father is to whom we direct our affection (Colossians 3:1). It Christ to whom we look as we steadfastly run the race before us (Hebrews 12:2). It is Christ that we are to learn (Matthew 11:29). It is Christ from whose fulness we receive (John 1:16). It is Christ as the living Bread come down from heaven upon which we feed (John 6:51). It is Christ that we go to in our trials and troubles for He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15).

It is as the Holy Spirit quickens us, enlightens our minds, inflames our hearts, and draws us to Christ, that we will desire to be occupied with Him. It is His work to

enable the quickened soul to receive from the Word a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of Christ, and to place within the heart the hungering and thirsting after Christ. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" (Psalm 42:1,2). This longing does not come from the heart of the natural man nor can it be manufactured.

As the Spirit takes the things of God and reveals them to our hearts, Christ is made known, and thereby becomes real and precious to the soul. The heart is brought into the enjoyment of His love, caused to delight in His perfections and His work, and to behold Him as "altogether lovely."

It is from this personal, inward, and spiritual knowledge of Christ, received from the Word, and as taught by the Spirit, that faith takes its rise to Him and love to Him. But all believers do not possess an equally clear and full knowledge of Christ. This is because of the various stages of growth of each. It is not the lesser knowledge or the fuller knowledge that is important, but is the desire there for this knowledge of the Saviour? In the O.T. gathering of the manna we read, "And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less" (Exodus 16:17). If the desire is there, the knowledge will come, for God rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6). If we don't gather a goodly portion through indolence or sloth, we cannot blame God, and therefore must blame ourselves. It is there for the taking.

We cannot stress too much that it is a personal appropriating knowledge. "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2). Hearing is not believing, "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble" (James 2:19). But ". . . faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

The more we study and meditate upon the glorious person of Christ, His perfections and His perfect redemption for our salvation, the more wonderful He becomes to us, and the more we should be occupied with our glorious Saviour and Lord. It is faith which makes Him real, "By faith he (Moses) forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). It is faith which makes Him present (Colossians 1:27). It is faith which makes Him dwell in our heart (Ephesians 3:17). It is faith which makes us desirous of preferring Him above all things. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none on earth that I desire but thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:25,26).

In Christ there is not only a fulness, but an overflowing abundance of grace. There is in Him a storehouse of perfections and excellencies. There is regenerating grace, justifying grace, reconciling grace, sanctifying grace, preserving grace, fruit-bearing grace, and grace for grace, abounding and abundant. There is a fulness of grace in Christ which infinitely exceeds our sin and need, and from this Fountain of grace we are invited to freely draw. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, . . ." (John 7:37).

We find several titles and truths concerning Christ in Colossians.

1. His dear Son, 1:13.
2. Who is the image of the invisible God, 1:15.
3. The firstborn of every creature, 1:15.
4. The Creator of all things, 1:16.
5. He is before all things, 1:17.
6. By Him all things consist, 1:17.
7. He is the Head of the Body, the church, 1:18.

8. Who is the beginning, 1:18.
9. The firstborn from the dead, 1:18.
10. He is the peace-maker and reconciler, 1:20-22.
11. In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, 2:3.
12. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, 2:9.
13. He is the Head of all principality and power, 2:10.
14. He sitteth on the right hand of God, 3:1.
15. Christ is all in all, 3:11.

Be occupied with His person, Who He is, our Saviour and Redeemer, the God-Man, His precious blood, our Mediator, the Head of the Body, the altogether lovely One, the Fairest of ten-thousand, He is the Grace of God, the Wisdom of God, the Power of God, the Peace of God, and in all things the Pre-eminent One.

Christ is ALL is the summing up of all truth. Christianity is Christ; Christ is God; Christ is all truth; everything that is holy, right, and beautiful is found in Him. The revelation concerning Him starts with the Seed of the woman, but by the time we reach Paul's prison epistles it has expanded into a mighty limitless ocean of the truth of Him who once stooped to the cross, and is now so highly exalted in ascension that he fills all things in heaven and earth (Ephesians 4:10).

The more our affections be set on Him, the lighter will we hold the things of the world, and the less will carnal pleasures appeal to us. The more we spiritually meditate upon His humiliations and sufferings, the more will we learn to loathe sin and the more will we esteem our afflictions as "light." Christ is exactly suited to our every need and Divinely qualified to supply it. We must learn to look less and less within and more and more to Him. We must not settle for any knowledge of Christ which does not make us more in love with Him and conform us more to His holy image.

Lastly, from the practical aspect, we must always look to Christ. This will keep us from looking at our failures, our sin, our love to Him, and what we are doing. We would be better to be occupied with Christ. Instead of looking at our failures, we must look to His triumph. Instead of looking at our sin, we must look to His forgiveness of our sin by His d,b,r. Instead of looking at our love for Him, we must look at His great love for us. Instead of looking at what we are doing for Him, we must look at what He has done for us and is now doing for us. Christ is our life, Christ is our righteousness, Christ is our peace, and we are complete in Him. **We must be occupied with with Christ.**