

## Christ, the Pursuit of Life

Philippians 3:10

“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

**There is something that makes Christianity more than a religion, more than an ethic, and more than the idle dream of the sentimental idealist.** It is this something that makes it relevant to each one of us right now as a contemporary experience. It is the fact that Christ Himself is the very life content of the Christian faith. It is He who makes it "tick" as seen in I Thessalonians 5:24, "God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful." The One who calls you is the One who does that to which He called you to do, as seen in Philippians 2:13, "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Jesus Christ is Himself the very dynamic of all His demands.

**Christ did not simply die that we might be saved from a bad conscience, or even to remove the stain of past failure, but to clear the way for divine action.** You have been told that Christ died to save you. That is gloriously true in a very limited, though vital sense, but there is more, for we have been told in Romans 5:10, "For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son." Christ therefore ministers to us in two distinct ways - **He reconciles us to God by His death, and He saves you by His life.**

**In other words, the Bible is teaching us that salvation is just the beginning of the Christian life.** The glorious fact of the matter is this - Christ not only died to save us, but He also lives to impart the very energy and power of God through us.

**Therefore, tonight we are going to see Christ as the Pursuit of life.** And to better see the scriptural setting, I will read from the New Living Translation verses 7-14, "I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what

Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us."

**There is not a great many people who can tell us what they are pursuing in life, or what the goal of their life is. I think that is a sad state of affairs.** It is a tragedy when a person does not know what the goal of his life is, because they have no direction in which to proceed; they have no target at which to aim.

The pursuit, or goal, of Paul's life is brought to light for us most clearly in verse 10 of our text, "I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death." **There are three things listed in verse 10 that make up the pursuit of the Christian life.**

**The first goal of every Christian should be to "know" Christ.** Now that might sound a little strange, but Paul says, "I want to *know* Christ..." **Therefore, the first goal is knowing the Person of Christ.**

"But," you might be thinking, "I thought Paul already knew Jesus. I thought Paul was already saved." Let me remind you that it was the same thing that Paul said in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." **Paul is not talking here about salvation.**

**But, we must be careful to realize that neither is Paul talking**

here about gaining more knowledge, nor getting more facts about the background and ministry of Christ. Paul is not saying, “That I may know about Him,” but “That I may know Him.” There is a vast difference in knowing about Christ, and knowing Christ.

The Greek word translated "know" means "knowledge based on experience." Simply put, Paul is saying, "I want to know Christ experientially in my everyday life." There are those people who call themselves "Christians," and they are members of some church, and they know an awful lot about Christ, and they can even quote page after page of scripture. But when it come to everyday living, and when it comes to knowing the joy of Christ, and knowing the release of Christ through their lives, and knowing any real victory over sin, they seem to come up empty. In other words, they have a lot of knowledge about Christ, but it doesn't seem to be doing them any good.

There may be some of you, in the sound of my voice tonight, that are saved, but the knowledge that you have of Christ is lying like a dead fish on the water of your life, and your knowledge of Christ is doing nothing for your Christian living. Knowledge of Christ and knowing Christ are two different things, and we need to come to the place of being able to tell that vast difference.

The difference is this - I know the President of these United States. I know what he looks like. I know where he lives. I know his wife's name. I know what political party he belongs to. I know many facts about his life. But the real truth of the matter is that I really don't know him, I just know about him. I have never met him. I have never sat down and fellowshiped with him. I don't really know him experientially in my life. Paul is saying in verse 10, “That I may know him...”

The second goal of every Christian should be to know the power of His resurrection. Paul says, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection...” Now Paul is not talking about knowing the truth concerning Christ's resurrection, neither is he talking about that day in the future when the last trumpet sounds and "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with

the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." That is not what Paul had for his goal in his Christian life. What Paul is saying is this; "I want to know the same power in my life that raised Jesus from the dead." That is exactly what we have been told in Romans 8:11-12, "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors - not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh."

On the third day after His crucifixion, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples. He instructed them for some forty days and then ascended to the Father. On the first day of Pentecost He returned, not this time to be with them *externally*, - but now to be *in* them, imparting to them His own divine nature. He spoke through their lips. He *worked* through their hands. He *loved* through their hearts. This was the miracle of the new birth, and it remains the very heart of the gospel even today.

This is the divine genius that saves a man from the futility of self-effort. It relieves the Christian from the burden of trying to pull himself up by his own boot-strings. If it were not for this divine provision, the call of Christ would be a source of utter frustration, as we faltered in failure and dismay.

Christ died that He might save you. He lives that He might impart to every child of God the energy and power of God Himself in our everyday living. And that is what Paul is saying when he says, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection..."

The third goal of every Christian should be to develop a partnership with Christ. The words, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death." The Greek wording here for "fellowship" means "partnership." Therefore, Paul is saying, "I want to become partners with Jesus in His suffering." But what does he mean by such a statement? The answer is found in Galatians

2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” **The goal of the Christian life is for Christ to live in us.**

**The child of God, in himself, cannot glorify God.** But Jesus made this promise in John 14:12, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father.” **Therefore, as Jesus Christ lives His life through us - we will be the *instruments*, or the *channels*, through which Jesus Christ glorifies God.** And if we are to glorify God, we must reproduce the likeness of Christ in our everyday living.

**Now that we have seen the goal of the Christian life, what is the key to making it work for us?** The answer is found in verses 13-14, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the *prize* of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” The Greek word translated “forgetting” means that we are not to live in *past experiences*, on *past emotions*, and we are not to allow *past failures* to hinder us in our walk with God. It means that we are not to allow Satan to rob us of our present victories, because he keeps reminding us of past failures, or problems, or of past sinfulness. Paul is reminding us of the same truth that is given in 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” The Bible is simply teaching us that when we confess our sins, God removes that sin and the blood of Christ cleans up the mess.

**But Paul does not stop there.** He goes on to say that we must “press toward the mark” of Christ. When Paul says, “This one thing I do,” he is saying, “I have but one goal, and that is to be what Christ has called me to be.” Child of God, whatever God has called you to be - be the very best for His glory.