

The pursuit of deeper relationship with Christ

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At the Resurrection Service (Easter Day), I talked about three main reasons why resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ occupies a Special and Central place in Christian Faith. The first reason is that the resurrection is God's own vindication (showing to be right and justified) of Jesus Christ. Christ was declared to be the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4).

The second main reason of the importance of resurrection is that it is the sure seal upon God's offer of forgiveness & salvation to every repentant sinner who will put his faith in Christ. { *Christ was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification* (Romans 3:25) }.

The third reason for the importance of the resurrection is that it constitutes the culmination of all our hopes as Christians and the supreme goal of our life of faith here on earth.

Writing to the believers in Philippi, Apostle Paul reveals his heart and the essence of Christianity (Phil 3:7-11). Paul's greatest longing was to know Christ and to experience His personal presence and companionship in a more intimate way. Nothing else in Paul's life even compared to this passionately earnest desire.

In fact, everything else was like worthless "rubbish" (V8) compared to knowing Christ better. In his pursuit of deeper relationship with Christ, Paul's highest aims were:

1. To know Christ intimately as a person, as well as
2. Understand His ways,
3. Experience His companionship,
4. Comprehend His nature and
5. Develop His character as revealed in God's Word.

True knowledge of Christ involves:

- (a) Listening to and studying His Word,
- (b) Applying and experiencing the Word.
- (c) Following the Holy Spirit's guidance in faith and obedience.
- (d) Identifying with Christ's character, concerns and purposes.

To be found in Christ (V9), means being united with Christ in such a way as to experience all the blessings and benefits of His character, power and promises (1:10-11; 1-Cor 1:30).

Paul wants his identity to be so completely wrapped up in his relationship with Christ that when others think of Paul, their attention is immediately drawn to Jesus.

To know the power of His resurrection (V10), referring to the miraculous power that raised Jesus from the dead (cf. Rom 8:11). Paul wanted to experience that same Spiritually renewing,
Life-transforming,
Miracle-working,
Sin-crushing power in his own life and ministry (Rom 6:4 & Eph 2:5-6).

To share in Christ's suffering through self-denial (see Mk 8:34 note), dying to the old-self (see Gal 2:20 note), and suffering for the sake of Christ and His cause (cf. 1:29; Acts 9:16; Rom 6:5-6; 1-Cor 5:31; 2-Cor 4:10; Gal 2:20; Col 1:24; 1-Pet 4:13).

The righteousness from God.

The righteousness of Christ's followers (i.e., their right relationship with God and the power of His Spirit to live inside by His standard) consists first of all in being forgiven, justified (made right with God) and accepted by God through faith (see Rom 4:5).

However, our righteousness is more than this. God's Word states that our righteousness is Jesus Christ himself, living within our hearts (cf. 1:20-21; Rom 8:10; 1-Cor 1:30; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:17 & Col 3:4).

This means that Jesus' righteous character is being expressed through us. In the OT, the Messiah (Savior/Christ) is referred to as the "righteous Branch" and "The LORD is our righteousness" (see Jeremiah 23:5-6).

This means that the righteousness we have is not of ourselves but is from Jesus, in whom we put our faith (1-Cor 1:30 & Gal 2:20).

Because of Christ's personal sacrifice for our sins and His presence within us by the Holy Spirit, we become in Him "the righteousness of God".

The basis for our Spiritual Salvation and our only hope of remaining in a right relationship with Christ is the sacrificial death and shed blood of Christ (Rom 3:24; 4:25; 5:9; 8:3-4; 1-Cor 5:3; Gal 1:4; 2:20; Eph 1:7; Heb 9:14; 1-Pet 1:18-19 and 1-John 1:4-10) as well as His resurrection life from the Holy Spirit within our hearts. Let us keep pursuing the deeper relationship with Jesus Christ—our Lord, our Savior.