

**KNOWING, EXPERIENCING, AND LIVING
THE ALL-INCLUSIVE CHRIST
FOR THE GENUINE CHURCH LIFE**

(Friday—First Morning Session)

Message One

**Being Brought Back to Christ Himself
for the Genuine Church Life**

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:8, 14-18; Phil. 3:3-16; Col. 1:15-18; 3:10-11

I. We, believers in Christ and children of God, need to be freed from all distractions and brought back to Christ Himself—Eph. 3:8, 14-18; Col. 3:10-11:

- A. God wants Christ to be the center of all things and to have the first place in all things—Christ being all and in all—1:15-18.
- B. Christ is wonderful; He is the wonder of the entire universe, and every item of what Christ is, is wonderful—Isa. 9:6; Judg. 13:18; Eph. 3:8.
- C. God's will, which is His eternal purpose and desire in the universe, is that Christ be everything to us and be wrought into us as our life and everything—v. 17a.
- D. Paul wrote his Epistles because he was clear that many good things, such as doctrines, ethics, morality, teachings, and culture, are distractions from Christ—Phil. 3:4-8:
 - 1. The apostle Paul shows us that these things are not Christ Himself, and he indicates that if they distract us from Christ, they are versus Christ—1 Cor. 7:35.
 - 2. When we turn away from all distractions and turn to Christ, we will be brought back to Christ Himself so that we may know Christ, experience Christ, enjoy Christ, express Christ, and be constituted with Christ—Gal. 2:20; 4:19; Phil. 3:9-10.
- E. In Philippians 3:3-16 Christ is presented as the goal of the believers' pursuit:
 - 1. On account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Paul counted all things to be loss—v. 8a.
 - 2. Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them as refuse in order to gain Christ—vv. 7, 8b.
 - 3. Paul's earnest desire was to be found in Christ—v. 9.
 - 4. The necessary condition of being found in Christ is not having our own righteousness but the righteousness of God through faith in Christ—v. 9.
 - 5. Paul aspired to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings—v. 10.
 - 6. In Philippians 3:10 Paul speaks of being conformed to Christ's death; this indicates that Paul desired to take Christ's death as the mold of his life.
 - 7. Paul experienced Christ as the drink offering and became a drink offering that was poured out upon the sacrifice and service of the saints' faith—2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6.
- F. We need to see a heavenly vision of God's intention to make Christ everything to us:
 - 1. If we receive new mercy and grace from the Lord, we will be able to drop all the good things—even the best things—and stretch forward to lay hold of Christ Himself—Phil. 3:7-8, 13.
 - 2. We need to pray that Christ will be everything to us in our daily life—Col. 3:17:
 - a. As we are doing various things, we should apply Christ in what we are doing.
 - b. Every day we need to pray for new experiences of Christ—the One who dwells in us to be our life and everything; this is our great need today—Eph. 3:17a.

**II. The issue of our being brought back to Christ Himself is the genuine church life—
1 Cor. 1:2; 12:27; Rom. 16:1, 4-5, 16, 20:**

- A. The genuine church life is Christ realized, experienced, and expressed by all the saints in a corporate way—Eph. 3:16-21:
 - 1. God planned the church for the purpose of expressing Christ; thus, the church is the expression of Christ—vv. 9-11, 21.
 - 2. The church life is nothing other than the all-inclusive Christ with His unsearchable riches experienced and enjoyed by us and expressed through us—vv. 8, 21.
 - 3. If we would have such a church life, we need to be constituted with Christ until all that we are and have is simply Christ Himself, who is all and in all; this is the essence and the substance of the church life—Col. 1:12; 2:9-10, 16-17; 3:4, 10-11; 4:15-16.
- B. The genuine church life is the life of Christ, Christ Himself—3:4; John 11:25:
 - 1. The genuine church life is not a matter of teaching or doctrine; rather, it is a life in which Christ Himself is realized, experienced, enjoyed, expressed, and exhibited by us—Phil. 3:10.
 - 2. The genuine church life can be realized only by the experience of Christ in our daily life—Rom. 8:9-11, 17.
- C. The way to realize the genuine church life is to experience Christ as everything to us—Col. 1:27; 2:17; 3:1, 4, 10-11, 15-17:
 - 1. The genuine church life comes from the genuine inner enjoyment of Christ—Eph. 3:17a.
 - 2. The development of Christ into our inward being issues in the genuine church life—4:13, 15-16.
 - 3. In order to have a church life to express Christ according to God's eternal purpose, our soul must be subdued and saturated with Christ as the Spirit—1 Thes. 5:23; Eph. 3:17a; Gal. 4:19; 1 Cor. 15:45b; 2 Cor. 3:17.
- D. The genuine church life requires us to take up our cross and follow Him—Matt. 10:38:
 - 1. We, His believers, were crucified with Christ, and now we must bear the cross—Gal. 2:20; Matt. 16:24.
 - 2. The self must be crossed out so that Christ can come to be the reality of the church life—vv. 23-24; Rom. 6:5.
 - 3. There is no other way to realize the genuine church life but to deny our natural life and the soul-life and follow the Lord in our spirit—Matt. 16:24-27.
- E. The genuine church life is through the inner experience of the indwelling Christ—Eph. 3:16-17a; 4:12, 16; 2:21-22:
 - 1. The entire New Testament is filled with the revelation of the indwelling Christ—Rom. 5:10, 17; Gal 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19; 1 Cor. 1:2, 9, 24, 30; Phil. 1:20b-21a; Col. 1:27.
 - 2. In Ephesians 3:16-21 Paul prayed that we would be strengthened with power into the inner man with the result that Christ could make His home in our hearts and thereby occupy, possess, permeate, and saturate our whole inner being with Himself—vv. 16-17a.
 - 3. When Christ is able to make His home in our hearts, occupying all the inward parts of our being, we will be able to have the genuine church life—2:21-22; 4:12, 16.
- F. In order for us to have the genuine church life, we need to experience and enjoy the riches of Christ—3:8:
 - 1. The genuine church life is not an organization; it is in our spirit, which is nourished with the riches of Christ until we are filled unto all the fullness of God—v. 8.

2. The genuine church life is a corporate life of seeking believers who are filled with the riches of Christ unto all the fullness of God, that is, unto the expression of the Triune God—v. 19.
 3. It is through the inner experience of the indwelling Christ that we apprehend with all the saints the unlimited measure of Christ and have the genuine church life for the building up of the Body of Christ—vv. 17-18; 2:21-22; 4:16.
 4. If we all experience and enjoy the riches of Christ, the genuine church life as the fullness, the expression, of Christ will be produced spontaneously—3:8, 17a; 2:22.
- G. All the saints need to experience something of Christ in their daily life and come together with the Christ whom they have experienced to exhibit this Christ, to share Him with one another, and to enjoy Him with God the Father for His pleasure; this is the genuine church life—1 Cor. 14:26; Heb. 10:25.