

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

C. H. Mackintosh (1820-1896)

The Christian's Standing, Object, and Hope

We believe that the third chapter of Philippians gives us the model of a true Christian. We have, first, the Christian's *standing*; secondly, the Christian's *object*; and thirdly, the Christian's *hope*.

We are not only told what the Christian's standing is, but also what it is not. If ever there was a man who could boast of having a righteousness of his own in which to stand before God, Paul was the man. "If," says he, "any other man thinketh that he hath whereof to trust in the flesh, I more" (Phil. 3:4). No one could excel Saul of Tarsus. He was a Jew, of pure pedigree, in orderly fellowship, of blameless walk, of fervid zeal and unflinching devotedness. He was, on principle, a persecutor of the Church. "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:7).

We should note here that the grand prominent thought in this passage is not that of a guilty sinner betaking himself to the blood of Jesus for pardon, but rather of a legalist casting aside, as dross, his own righteousness, because of having found a better. **We** need hardly say that Paul was a sinner, and that, as such, he betook himself to the precious blood of Christ, and there found pardon, peace, and acceptance with God. But it is not the leading thought in the chapter before us. Paul is not speaking of his *sins*, but of his *gains*.

The special point presented in Philippians 3:4-8 is not a sinner getting his sins pardoned, his guilt cleared, his shame covered, but a legalist laying aside his righteousness, a scholar casting away his laurels, and a man abandoning his vain glory, simply because he had found true glory, unfading laurels, and an everlasting righteousness in the Person of a victorious and exalted Christ. **We** are anxious that the reader should clearly apprehend this point. It is not merely that my sins *drive me* to Christ; but that His excellencies *draw me* to Him. True, I have sins and therefore I **need** Christ; but even if I had a righteousness, I should cast it from me, and gladly hide myself "*in Him*."

Thus, then, we see that the *standing* of a Christian is *in Christ*. "Found in Him" (Phil. 3:9). This is Christian standing. Nothing less, nothing lower, nothing different. It is not partly in Christ and partly in law, or partly in ordinances. No; it is "found in Him." It is not Judaism, Catholicism, nor any other **ism**. It is not the being a member of this church, that church, of the other church. It is to be in Christ. This is the great foundation of true practical Christianity. Christ is our righteousness. He Himself, the crucified, risen, exalted, glorified Christ.

In the second place, look at the Christian's *object*. Here again, Christianity shuts us up to Christ: "That I may *know Him*" (Phil. 3:10). If to be "found in Him" constitutes the Christian's standing, then "to know Him" is the Christian's proper object. **The** ancient philosophy had a motto which was, "Know thyself." Christianity, on the contrary, has a loftier motto, pointing to a nobler object. It tells us to know Christ, to fix our earnest gaze on Him.

This, and this alone, is the Christian's *object*. It matters not in the least what the object is; if it is not Christ, it is not Christianity. The true Christian's desire will ever **be** embodied in these words, "That I may *know Him*, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death" (v. 10). It may be all well enough for a man, who does not know Christ as his righteousness, to do the best he can in the way of working out a righteousness for himself; but to the one whose standing is in a risen Christ, the very fairest righteousness that could be produced by human efforts would be an actual loss.

We may depend upon it that one great reason of the low tone which prevails amongst Christians will **be** found in the fact that the eye is taken off Christ and fixed upon some lower object. "Our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 3:20), and we should **never** be satisfied to propose to ourselves any lower object than Christ.

It is a man's object, not his position, that gives him his character. "This one thing I do," Paul could say (v. 13). **Our** third point is the Christian's *hope*, which is to be *like Christ*. How beautifully perfect is the connection between these three things. No sooner do I find myself in Christ as my righteousness, than I long to know Him as my object, and the more I know Him, the more ardently shall I long to be like Him, which hope can only be realized when I see Him as He is. Having a perfect righteousness, and a perfect object, I just want one thing more, and that is to be done with everything that hinders my enjoyment of that object. "For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil. 3:20-21).

We would ask the reader to pursue the marvelous **theme** for himself. And may the language of his heart be, “Let me turn away my eye from men altogether, and fix it intently upon Christ Himself, and find all my delight in Him as my righteousness, my object, my hope.”

From “Miscellaneous Writings” pages 553-557 (extracts)

REMEMBER:

Christianity is Christ

Our Standing: In Christ

Our Object: Know Christ

Our Hope: Like Christ

Christ is not a way to God, or one of the many ways, but He said:

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)