

To know Christ and to gain Christ are two ways of expressing the same ambition. If Christ is the one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3), to know him means to have access to those treasures; but to know him for his own sake is what matters to Paul most of all.¹

9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Messiah, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

Paul now elaborates what he means in the former clause by the expression “that I may gain Messiah.” He utilizes the passive voice of the verb “to find” (*εὐρίσκω, euriskō*) thus emphasizing that to be “in Him” is not something that one is able to bring about himself, but that ultimately the Father fully reckons the believer in Yeshua to be “in Him,” that is, counted as righteous as Yeshua Himself is righteous. Here, once again, Paul is emphasizing that salvation is entirely the work of God’s grace which is applied to the repentant sinner by faith, not by earning God’s favor. Thus we might understand Paul’s words “to be found” to mean: “to be seen, discovered, or proved to be.”²

Thus Paul paints a beautiful picture for everyone who, by faith in Yeshua, is reckoned by the Father as united with Yeshua and thus participating in His righteousness. For those who are “in Him” are declared by the Father as having the very righteousness of Yeshua Himself imputed to them.

Reach my blest Saviour first; Take Him from God’s esteem;
Prove Jesus bears one spot of sin; Then tell me I’m unclean!³

To be “found in Him” emphasizes being “given” to Messiah by the Father and this means to be fully associated with Him since it is only by Him that salvation has been secured for all those for whom He died. Thus Paul repeatedly describes the believer as being “in Messiah” (*ἐν Χριστῷ, en Christō*), that is, being viewed by the Father as fully righteous even as Yeshua Himself is righteous.

1 F. F. Bruce, *Philippians in UTB Commentary*, p. 113.

2 Marvin Vincent, *Philippians in ICC* (T & T Clark, 1897), p. 101.

3 From the hymn “Christ’s Grave is Vacant Now,” (W. Noel Tomkins)

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua. For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (Rom 8:1-2)

But by His doing you are in Messiah Yeshua, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." (1Cor 1:30-31)

Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (2Cor 5:17)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah.... (Eph 1:3)

...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Messiah (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Messiah Yeshua. (Eph 2:5-7)

For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yeshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:10)

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Messiah will rise first. (1Thess 4:16)

It seems quite apparent that Paul utilizes a kind of "poetic chiasm" in the way he describes the glory and wonder of "being found in Him," that is, being "declared righteous" by the substitutionary work of Yeshua on behalf of all who have been given to Him.¹ The structure of the following lines were crafted by Paul (who was being "carried along" by the Ruach HaKodesh, 2Pet 1:20-21), so as to make them easier to remember and thus regularly to mediate upon them.

Note this chiastic structure (following the actual Greek phrases) which places emphasis upon the middle phrase.

1 Cf. Jn 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me...."

(μὴ ἔχων) *not having*

1a (ἐμὴν) *my*

2a (δικαιοσύνην) *righteousness*

3a (τὴν ἐκ νόμου) *derived from the law*

4 (ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ)

but that which is by faith in Messiah

3b (τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ) *the out of God*

2b (δικαιοσύνην) *righteousness*

1b (ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει) *by means of faith*

Note the emphasis expressed in this chiastic arrangement:

- 1a “my” is the opposite of
- 1b “by means of faith,” reminding us that our salvation is a gift of God, not something one earns, for faith itself is the gift of God and is obtained by God’s gracious working, not something the believer has done on their own or by their own power.
- 2a “righteousness” refers to “one’s own righteousness”
- 2b “righteousness” refers to God’s righteousness freely given to the believer
- 3a “derived from the Law,” i.e., earning one’s righteousness by works
- 3b “by means of faith,” i.e., righteousness as the gift of God through the work of Yeshua in paying for sin
- 4 “that which is by faith in Messiah” – This is the point which the chiastic lines emphasize. By faith, not by works.

...*not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law*, – Here Paul, with absolute clarity, teaches us in these inspired words, that righteous standing before God cannot be earned by whatever means mankind may invent. The primary emphasis he gives us here is that the Torah was never given as a means of obtaining righteous standing before God, for such righteous standing simply cannot be derived from the Torah for the obvious reason that fallen mankind inherits the guilt of Adam, beginning life with the sinful nature and thus is already judged as unrighteous by the Almighty. Paul teaches us this in Rom 5:12–14.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because [proved by] all sinned — for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (Rom 5:12–14)

Here we see the clear and direct teaching of the Scriptures. Because every person is born a sinner, all are deserving of the righteous wrath of God. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Moreover, to come into an eternal and loving relationship with their Creator is not something that anyone can purchase or earn in their own strength. For "the wages of sin is death (i.e., eternal separation from God) but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord." (Rom 6:23)

While it is surely true that all fallen mankind as a whole, being born with the sin nature, naturally think that a person can win God's favor by his or her own "good deeds," in our text Paul is specifically addressing those who are counting on their Jewish status (whether by birth or by rabbinic "conversion") as maintained through obeying the Torah, to be that which secures God's favor and blessing, both in this world and in the world to come. But apart from dying to oneself and being given new life by faith in God and His Messiah, what one may consider as "righteous actions" actually falls completely short of obtaining right-standing with God. As Isaiah wrote:

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. (Is 64:6)

Surely Paul was a living testimony of one who excelled in the eyes of the Jewish authorities for his outward adherence to the established "religious *halachah*" of the Pharisaic sect to which he belonged. Yet, as we have seen in the opening verses of this chapter, when Paul was confronted by Yeshua Himself, in terms of "gaining" right standing with God, he considered all of his "religious achievements" as worthless in terms of winning God's favor and blessing.

Thus we have, from these inspired words of Paul, yet another clear and incontrovertible proof that eternal salvation is obtained by faith alone (*sola fide*) and not by anything a person can do to earn God's favor and thereby to be accepted and received by Him as righteous.

... but that which is through faith in Messiah, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, – First we should note that grammatically there are two ways the phrase translated "faith in Messiah" could be understood. This is because the Greek is: τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ, woodenly rendered as "through the faith/faithfulness of Messiah." The grammatical issues are two: first, that the Greek word πίστις (*pistis*)

can carry either the meaning “to be faithful” or “to believe or trust.” Moreover, the word “Messiah” (χριστοῦ, *chrisou*, genitive), can be read as objective or subjective, meaning either that “Messiah is the object of faith,” thus “faith in Messiah” (KJV, NASB, ESV, NIV) or “Messiah is the subject of faith,” thus “...that which is through faithfulness of Messiah” or “Messiah’s faithfulness” (NET, CJB, Geneva-Bible, Heb-Roots-Bible).

If we take the verse as a whole (as it surely ought to be read) and in the larger context compare this verse with 1:29 and 2:17, it seems clear that the greater weight of evidence falls on the side of accepting the genitive χριστοῦ, *chrisou*, as an objective genitive and thus emphasizing that Yeshua is “the object of the believer’s faith.” In fact, the vast majority of the times Paul uses the word πίστις (*pistis*), “faith,” in his epistles, he consistently uses it to denote believers putting their trust in Messiah Yeshua.¹ And the next phrase of our verse would surely support this understanding.

... *the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith*, – Here it is clear that Paul is teaching us regarding placing one’s faith in the person and work of Yeshua in order to gain a righteous standing before God. Surely these inspired words of the apostle affirm beyond doubt that the glorious privilege of a sinner being received by God as fully righteous is only because God Himself has declared that person “righteous” on the basis that the payment for their sin has fully satisfied His infinite holiness. Such a payment could never have been amassed by the sinner himself but could only be made by One Who is Himself without sin and Who is Himself infinite in His very being. Moreover, it is His righteousness that is given to all who recognize their utter inability to gain His favor and who therefore accept the gift of His grace by believing and receiving by faith the promise of the gospel.

Surely our text, along with many others, establishes the truth that eternal salvation is by God’s grace alone and cannot be earned or secured by anyone’s works. As Calvin notes:

He thus, in a general way, places man’s merit in opposition to Christ’s grace; for while the law brings works, faith presents man before God as naked, that he may be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. When, therefore, he declares that the righteousness of faith is from God, it is not simply because faith is the gift of God, but because God justifies us by his goodness, or because we receive by faith the righteousness

1 Garland, David E., *Philippians in Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Zondervan, 2006), p. 242.

which he has conferred upon us.¹

10–11 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul continues expressing his greatest desire which he began to relate in v. 9 with the phrase “so that I might gain Messiah,” expressing his longing to fully be trusting in Yeshua and thus pleasing Him in every aspect of life. This he also communicates with the words “and may be found in Him,” i.e., having fully trust my life into His care and having received from Him assurance of His grace, forgiveness, and eternal salvation. These are the expression of a soul redeemed by God’s grace and fully aware that he has been granted full acceptance and eternal salvation through the unending grace of God in Yeshua. In short, Paul’s expressions “that I might gain Messiah” and “may be found in Him” are the joyful confessions of being born again by the Ruach and having been granted saving faith in the work and person of Yeshua. Or more specifically, these are expressions of someone who has truly been forgiven and granted the status of “fully righteous” in God’s eyes.

...*that I may know Him* – Having given us his inner longings which related to his having come to faith in Yeshua, Paul now in this phrase moves from “justification” (being declared righteous) to “sanctification,” the process by which the believer more and more conforms their life to God’s standards of righteousness, becoming more and more like Yeshua in thought, word, and actions.

The word “know” in the phrase “that I may know Him,” in the Greek (τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτόν) is an aorist infinitive. Since often the aorist indicates action that is completed, some have suggested that in this phrase Paul is describing knowing Yeshua in the future resurrection of the eschaton.² But the aorist also is used in a punctiliar fashion, meaning “a point in time.” Thus Paul used this form to express his present desire to “know God,” that is, to know His will, instructions, and commands for all aspects of his life. Here, once again, the word “know” is used in a covenant sense,³ for “to know Him” means to maintain and to live out his life as a true and abiding member of the covenant of salvation into

1 Calvin, *Philippians*, p. 98.

2 See the discussion in Gordon Fee, *Philippians*, NICNT, p. 327, n. 48.

3 See comments above on Phil 3:8.

which the Lord had brought him, with the Ruach HaKodesh as the seal of the covenant.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:13–14)

... and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings,

What is this power? It first reminds us that death has occurred, for those who are resurrected have died. The power of Yeshua’s resurrection, then, is that He proved Himself to have the power over death. Even as Paul was in prison awaiting the verdict of the judges, he was able to reckon his current suffering as experiencing in some measure the very kind of suffering Yeshua Himself endured and thus was enabled, with this perspective in mind, to rejoice in such suffering since it drew him closer to the Messiah he served. Surely Paul’s life at this juncture “hung in the balance” held by those who had the power of life and death, yet he was insistent upon putting his hope in the truth of God, that death was not the end but that resurrection from the dead and life with God for eternity was a surety. This gave him the power to endure the woes that he had experienced and that may yet come to him in this fallen world. Thus, it is one’s true faith in God that enables a person to bear up under the woes of this world.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. (1Jn 5:4)

...being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. – This wording no doubt rests upon the language Paul used in 2:5–8, where he admonishes the Philippian believers to “have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Messiah Yeshua.” The mindset he admonishes there is seen in the way he outlined the manner in which Yeshua humbled Himself, left the glory of His heavenly abode, came in the likeness of human flesh, and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Thus, “being conformed to His death” must be understood as Paul’s great desire to have the same inner strength and faith to follow in Yeshua’s footsteps by fulfilling His mission to serve Him even if this were to result in his death.

Here the Apostle reminds all of us how much we must long to be like Yeshua, which includes having the same goal that He had as He humbled Himself to bring about the divine plan of salvation. This causes us to constantly ask ourselves an all-important question: “Is serving the Lord and living to bring about His purposes my highest goal in life?” As we seek to have this as our life priority, we will likewise desire to find any and all means that strengthen us to reach this goal.

The ultimate goal which Paul has is “to attain to the resurrection of the dead.” This does not mean that he had any fear that he might not attain this goal. Rather, by the phrase “to attain to the resurrection of the dead,” he means to finally and eternally dwell with Yeshua. In other words, the ultimate goal that Paul had, and that every believer should have, is to hear the words from Yeshua Himself: “Well done, good and faithful servant.” (Matt 25:21)