



To Be Known

If you have ever been a teacher, you know the class period often ends before you get everything done, or after the class has just walked out the door, you discover something you wish you had said. Well here we are, just one week into this and I am already there. So... we are going to go back to verses 7-8 before we move on to verse 9 this week. It is just the teacher in me I guess.

Last week as I continued reviewing verses 7-8, there was a word that kept jumping out at me. If you are memorizing in the NIV perhaps you caught it too. In those two verses the word shows up three times. The word is "consider". We are calling this project *Faith Living 101* and through that word, the Lord kept reminding me that much of my faith comes from how I consider things.

What does it mean to consider something? It means you are looking at it carefully, examining it, determining its meaning and influence. Over the years I have learned the value of considering. In our fast paced society however, we often don't stop to consider. Paul is setting the example here. In the original Greek, the word is translated as "counted" and you will note that word used in the KJV and NASV versions. This original word held a connotation of leadership with it too. In other words Paul is saying, I have learned this, now follow my example as I lead you; stop and consider where you have been and where you are going, make sure how you are living is really lining up with your faith. That is a basic faith living example in action for us. O that we would follow it! As we finish out that thought let me share one scripture with you. Proverbs 5:6 says,

"she does not consider the path of life, her ways are unstable, she does not know it."

In reality this verse is describing an adulterous woman. However, God many times, calls his children adulteresses. When we as His children walk away from His love and ways for us, to God it is as if we are being an adulteress in our relationship to Him. None of us want that for our lives! When Paul was living in blatant sin, I believe he didn't realize it because he didn't stop long enough to consider his paths. In a sense, he was adulterating his relationship with God. Paul wants to spare us from that kind of faithless living, so in leadership, he again and again says, "consider". So what's the point? Walking in faith requires a consistent consideration of our paths. As we consider, we determine those things that are really worthless to a faith filled life, considering them as trash, and then moving forward with the things that are full of faith!

Ok, now on to verse 9... thanks for sticking with me. The Lord kept impressing "consider" on my heart; I just had to share about it. In verse 9 we move on to a different kind of considering though. It is not just how we are considering life, but how God is considering us as we live.

Throughout history people have done all kinds of things to be accepted by God. The list of man made religious duties designed to impress God includes a variety of things and it goes on and on... And you know what, amidst all the human effort to please God, there is a belief system that we can discover just the right thing to cover up our human mess and please Him. There is that idea of hiding who we really are while doing something good designed to impress God. It goes all the way back to the beginning. From the minute man entered into sin, he has been hiding from God. Adam and Eve didn't have enough time to concoct a plan to impress God and therefore cover up their sin, so they did the next best thing, they hid. Read in Genesis 3:8 and you will see how Adam and Eve sensed

God's presence and went into hiding. Only problem was they couldn't hide from God then, and we can't do it now either. In light of all of that, verse 9 begins

"and be found in Him..."

Now that is a new concept. For centuries man had been hiding behind his religious duties, fulfilling the law, hoping God wouldn't see him for who he really was, and now Paul is saying he wants to be found by God. How can he really mean that? He can mean that because he has come face to face with himself in light of Christ and found that true acceptance.

You see, look back to that dusty road in Acts chapter 9 that we mentioned last week. On that road, God found Paul (then Saul) and shined the biggest spotlight ever right on his sinful humanity. It didn't matter that Saul had kept the law in many ways. The fact that he had broken it as well was evident. If Saul had ever thought he would impress God, that thought was dispelled pretty quickly. I have to believe that Hebrews 4:13 was borne out of his dusty road, light shining experience. It says,

"And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."

Aren't we glad we serve a God of second chances? As Paul has now matured in Christ, he wants to be found again. It is almost like he is saying, "God come looking for me again. I have got it right this time! When you look this time, you won't find me trusting in my religion, trusting in my denomination, trusting in the discipline of reading my Bible daily, or praying, or attending church, or doing good deeds, or teaching a class, or obeying my parents or _____, or _____, or _____, or _____, or _____ - you fill in the blanks.

Paul says, "no you will find me..."

"not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

In Christian circles we are always told that there is freedom in Christ; that is a true statement. I believe there are many kinds of freedom, but possessing that deep knowledge that you are known by your Creator and are still accepted by Him, that is the greatest freedom ever. There is no need to hide. When he comes looking you can say "Here I am, here I am!" Or when you have something to say to Him you can run confidently in the throne room and say it. (Hebrews 4:14-16) Because Christ has covered our sin, when God sees us, and He can see every part of us, we are seen as righteous and we are accepted. As a person living on this earth before a holy God, I have two choices: 1) I can accept that by faith and enjoy the freedom of being known by God or 2) I can continue in man's way of trying to hide myself from God by covering up my wrongs with a bunch of good works.

Paul says, I have counted that kind of living (#2) as trash, it doesn't work, never has, never will. Paul has experienced the freedom of being real with God, knowing that God sees it all anyway. He has experienced the freedom of having a right standing with God because of the fact that Christ is perfect. Because Christ is perfect, Paul doesn't have to be. He just has to accept that by faith.

So that is Paul's experience. What about yours? Have you allowed yourself to be found? There is freedom there! I love the way the Message Bible expresses verse 9,

"I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ—God's righteousness."

Amen!

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