

Coming to Know the Lord Jesus

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[0:00] Philippians, so if you want to turn there, so many people have what they call a favorite verse out of the scripture or favorite passage out of the scripture.

I don't know that I really have a favorite passage. I know to me all of them are good. They're all profitable, all God inspired, God breathed, if you will, and profitable for everything God said it was. And so nothing in scripture really I could say is my favorite. I like all of it.

But there is one in particular that really speaks to my heart and has for a number of years now. I guess I could almost say that it has served to be the theme of my Christian life and Christian experience.

And so I just thought I'd share that with you this evening. It's out of Philippians chapter 3. But as we get there, just kind of set a background here.

When the Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Church of Philippi, a little different than a lot of the other letters, in that he kind of majors on Christian life, some of the elements of Christian life, Christian living, and Christian experience as well.

[1:34] To me, he speaks highly and shows, if you will, what we could call the benefits of the Christian experience.

Even though the Christian experience has a lot of difficulty at times, there's even benefits in that. And I think the Apostle Paul shows us that.

I hope that we can see the heart and mind of the Apostle Paul in this and that it might stimulate us more and more toward having that same type of heart.

If I were to ask you tonight, tell me what you know about the Lord Jesus. I know we'd get a lot of variety of answers, many of them the same.

But I want us to consider some other things here tonight about knowing the Lord Jesus. So if we were to put a title to the session tonight, it would be simply coming to know the Lord Jesus.

[2:41] In chapter 3, the whole experience of the book of Philippians, Paul kind of summarizes the thoughts that he has in chapter 1, verses 19 through 21.

And this is what he says there. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. That kind of summarizes the theme of Paul's letter here. And that coming through Christian experience. All right. So he begins chapter 3 by saying, finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.

Interesting way of starting the chapter. Just rejoice in the Lord. If you don't have anything else to say, just tell him to rejoice in the Lord. All right. To me, to write to you the same things is indeed not grievous, but it's for your sake and for you to be safe.

[4:07] And so he warns them in verse 2, beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. All right. So again, false teachers, in particular Judaizers, that come and say, yes, Jesus is the Christ.

He is the Savior, but he's the Savior of Israel. If you're going to be saved, you have to be converted to Judaism as well as trust Christ as Lord and Savior.

And so in the next phrase, if you will, he clarifies some things that begins the process of showing what he's trying to say here. For we are the circumcision which worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Of course, circumcision speaks of that token that God gave to Israel, commanded them to do as a sign of the covenant relationship that he has with them, that they are the people of God.

So Paul is saying the real evidence of us being the people of God is not an outward token of circumcision, but it is that which lies within the heart and speaks toward the true relationship with God through faith and trust in Christ Jesus.

[5:32] Now, he sets forth his argument in verse 4, his argument about trusting in the flesh. The reality is, if there's anybody that can trust in the flesh, anybody that has a right to do that, it's got to be Paul.

And that's what he's saying here. And he lies out the argument here. Now, trusting in the flesh, you know, a lot of times we think about, all right, working in the power of the flesh, the fleshly mind, as opposed to the spirit of God and the mind that's led by the spirit.

But more so what Paul is relating to here is just that idea that the Judaizers put forward here.

Remember, the Jews always thought, knowing they were the covenant nation of God, that because of their pedigree, if you will, because they were Jews, because they were the chosen people of God, that they had favor with God, they had a right standing with God by keeping the law that could be justified by God.

So that was their pride, if you will. Well, but that's what they cling on to as far as justification, judicial standing with God, is that they were Jews.

But Paul said, Paul said, if anybody has a right to lay claim to that, that confidence in the flesh of being marked as a Jew, I have the right more than anybody else to have that confidence.

[7:09] And he lays out the argument. He says in verse 4, Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man think that he have whereof he might have trust in the flesh, I more, and here it is, circumcised the eighth day.

Now, that was subscribed to in the law. Eight days old, boys, boys, the males, born to Hebrew families, were to be circumcised on the eighth day.

Converts to Judaism, they had to wait till maturity, whatever time of life that was. Ishmaelites, when they came, had to wait till they were 13 years old.

But not Paul. Paul was circumcised on the eighth day, because he was of the stock of Israel. The word stock there speaks of origin.

He's not from Esau, but he's from Jacob. All right. Paul said, no, I'm from Jacob. Circumcised the eighth day, because I was from the line of Jacob.

[8:17] All right. And then he says, says, I'm of the tribe of Benjamin. That, that highly, highly sought of tribe of Israel that came alongside Judah, was an ally to David, and all of those things.

And so he said, I'm from the tribe of Benjamin. I'm also a Hebrew of Hebrews. My mom and dad were both Jews.

I'm not a half blood. I'm a full blood. My parents were Jews, both of them. They spoke the Hebrew language. All right.

They didn't do as others did. They spoke the Hebrew language, and they knew the Hebrew customs and kept those. All right. So he's got a pretty good pedigree going here.

Now, notice what else he says. As touching the law, a Pharisee, remember who the Pharisees were, they were strict adherents to the law, and they were strict in protecting and preserving the law.

[9:33] And as a result of that, added a lot of things to that. All right. That was his pedigree. You know, a learned man in all of that as well.

As touching the law, I was, or I was and am a Pharisee. All right. A strictest sect of the Pharisees. He was a zealot. All right. The idea there was, his passion, his drive, was toward the law and protecting the law.

And anything that contradicted the law was set to be dealt with. And that's, that's what he did.

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church. Touching the righteousness, which is by the law, blameless. As the Jews would think that the law promised justification with God to whatever degree that came, he said, as a young boy, I set my goal to be justified by the law.

[10:47] And in so doing, I kept the law as closely and best as anyone could do. Pretty good pedigree.

As a Hebrew of Hebrews, his family was a, was a wealthy family as well. All right. And so keep all of that in mind. So that, that's the claim that Paul had here.

And you realize that as he went along persecuting the church, that's how he rode. All right. With that pedigree in mind, I could just conjure him thinking in his mind who he was and who he is going to

persecute those that claim that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the blasphemers, if you will. But all of a sudden, something happened to the apostle Paul or to Saul of Tarsus. And later became the apostle Paul. So now he gains a new perspective.

And it's a proper perspective. All right. It's the proper perspective. Look at verse seven. Here's where we want to get to. Verse seven and following. Those things that were gained to me, everything that pertained to my life that were beneficial, beneficial, the things that he just mentioned and the numerous things that he did not mention.

[12 : 16] All those things of the flesh that were beneficial to me, what did he do with it? Notice what it says. I counted loss for Christ.

Now that word counted. You know, a lot of times we think, well, all of a sudden, boom, on that road to Damascus, when he was struck by that brightness of light, fell to the ground, Jesus speaks to him and he's converted, that all of a sudden, everything became completely different for him. But that's not the case. He was saved there, yes. Came to realize that the one he persecuted was indeed Christ.

But when he says here, all those things that were beneficial to me, I counted loss. The idea of the word count here is a past action that has present results.

It's the idea of contemplation. Don't you wish, don't you wish God had seen fit to allow Saul of Tarsus to pin down his thoughts after he went into the house where he was told to go and just sat there and waited?

[13 : 45] The thoughts that must have come to his mind. He contemplated some things. Contemplated who he was, all the benefits of those things.

Now I'm not saying all this happened right there at that moment, but through the years. And then put those together with what he has in Christ.

What he has, what the benefits, if you will, are in appropriating Christ and all that he is to his life. He kind of put him in the balance to see how that would come out.

And he realized that it's far better to do away with these things and appropriate Christ.

So that's what he's saying here. I've contemplated and I've come to that conclusion that it's best for me to set aside, count loss, those things that were gained to me.

[14 : 53] Yea, verse 8, doubtless, and I count all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.

Now, I count, same idea, settled conviction brought by contemplation of the things that took place and the things that matter here.

all right, realize that the price he would have to pay by holding on to those things that were gained to him would be costly.

It would prevent him from appropriating Christ to his life. Boy, that's something for us to consider, isn't it? Isn't it? Yeah.

Good thing to ask ourselves is, is there anything of the fleshly nature, of a fleshly nature, I should say, anything of the flesh that I'm clinging to, that I have not forfeited yet, that's hindering me from appropriating the fullness of Christ to my life?

[16 : 10] Hmm. Now, we make a big, a big compromise in some of this when we say, or an excuse when we say, yeah, but that's because I'm human.

Amen? How many are human? How many are spiritual? Sure you are.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. You have spirit. Amen? And if you place faith and trust in Christ, he's your savior, you're spiritual.

You have the spirit of God within you. All right? So, so, in reality, this idea of, well, I'm just human, doesn't hold water.

All right? to let go of the things that are beneficial to us of a fleshly nature so that we can appropriate Christ.

[17 : 14] Now, I've counted them loss for the excellency of the knowledge. I want you to notice something here. The terminology he uses, he said, I have suffered the loss of all things.

All right? I counted all things loss. It's not the idea that he took them one by one. All right? Okay, here I am, here I am, circumcised the eighth day.

All right, I'll count that loss. Then goes along, and, you know, I'm from the tribe of Benjamin. I'll turn that, no.

He takes all of it, every aspect of it, of those things of his life that were beneficial to him, that were simply of the flesh, takes them all, puts them in one package, one package, and throws them on the heat pile.

Yeah. He counts them all loss, all at one time. All right? With the idea of never looking back. He said, I've done that in verse eight.

[18:31] Count all things loss. Why? For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.

For the excellency of the knowledge. knowledge. That's the knowledge that Paul speaks of that he gains. That is knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

And then later on, we'll see in just a minute. Yeah. Then he talks about wanting to know him. All right?

So to come to know Christ is why he has counted all things beneficial to him loss. And notice this passage says, for the excellency of the knowledge.

All right? To know his heart, to know his mind, to know his will. That only comes through that personal, intimate, companionship, and communion with Christ.

[19:41] Now, the excellency simply means to excel, to be superior. And the idea here is the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Having a knowledge of Christ is so much greater than anything else that we have.

When I was up in Copan, we used to sing a little chorus once in a while. And as we sang it, I kind of thought, well, how contradictory this is.

You know, I'm sure, Dan, you probably know the verse, the greatest thing in all my life is knowing you. And you go through and you sing that greatest thing in all my life is knowing you.

Then the sixth verse, the greatest thing in all my life is serving you. And I'm thinking, okay, make up your mind. Which is, you know, yeah, yeah.

It's good to serve him. But the greatest thing is to know him. All right? And that song goes through about four different things. I was hoping at the end they'd tie it all together, but they didn't.

[20:44] All right? So, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord. I like the way the Amplified Version writes this.

It says, I count all things but loss for the priceless privilege, that is, the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage of knowing Christ.

That says it well. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things. Have suffered is a business term, if you will. And it's the idea of forfeiting something.

All right? I have forfeited those things that were beneficial for me. Now, remember, all those things he listed plus whatever he didn't list.

But realize with me, what else he forfeited here that kind of speaks to us from the idea he was a Hebrew of Hebrews is the idea that he forfeited the wealth that was his from his family and he also forfeited a family relationship.

[21:56] Hebrews that were steeped in Judaism felt it unheard of to be converted to Christianity.

But Paul was radically. And so he forfeited family as well. That gives weight to the idea of what he's saying here.

that I've counted all that loss. Count it all done, he says. Refuse. For one reason.

Well, no more than one reason. Well, there's other attachments to the one reason. But one reason.

So that I might know Christ. Now, and be found in, no, that I might, excuse me, I'm sorry.

Let's back up here. Back in verse 8. Can I all lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, do count them but done.

[23:03] Why? That I may win Christ. The idea of winning Christ here, the word win here is the idea of gain. The picture that Paul's giving us here is, yes, he wants to know Christ Jesus.

but in winning him, in gaining him, he wants all the graces and fragrance, perfection of Christ permeating his life.

What is that? It's Christ's likeness. Amen? All those graces, perfections, the fragrance of Christ. He wants permeating his life.

That's why he counts all of this loss. And, be found in him, be found in him by anybody that sees him, everybody that knows him.

I mean, after all, he's got a reputation. Amen? Amen? He had a reputation before he got saved, and he has an even greater reputation after he got saved. He wants anybody that knows him, that sees him, to know that he is in Christ, that that is his righteousness.

[24:31] It's not his obedience to the law that brings that righteousness, but he wants people to know that he is in Christ.

To be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Now, look at the next verse, verse 10. That I may or might know him. That I might know him.

All right? That's experiential knowledge. Knowledge that comes by experience, and Paul wants the fullness of that experiential knowledge. How do you get to know somebody?

Spend time with them. Ted and Yolanda are new folks around these parts. Get to know Ted a little bit, and Yolanda. But I still haven't quite made up a mind about Ted.

[25:45] If I've even gone to his house and drunk coffee with him, Mike and I even go over tomorrow and help him install a microwave above the stove for his wife.

Maybe we'll get to know more about him that way. Amen? Yeah. Yeah. I get a tea tab. You get tea? For two?

What does it mean? What does it mean to know somebody like this? What does it mean? I mean, we throw that word out there.

But what does it really mean to know somebody? to me, there's two ways to look at that. Know somebody, I know somebody I work with, I know them, but I don't really know them until I really, basically, the way I want to say it is how they tick.

How they think, how they react. Yeah, exactly. How they think, what their likes are, what their dislikes are, what their attitude is, what their philosophy is, all of those type of things.

[27:01] And the only way, the only way that you can know that is to be with that person constantly.

the best, I will say, the closest example of that would be husband and wife. With the exclusion of the fact that men still haven't figured out women yet.

Amen? Yeah, yeah. You know, your spouse, you, I mean, you live with them. You do things with them.

You talk with them. You get to understand their mind and their heart. All of those things. Paul says, that's what I want to know.

I want the fullness of that experience of coming to know who Jesus is. Now, how do we do that?

[28:08] Somebody tell me. How do we do that? Okay. Read the scriptures. What else? Okay.

What else? What else? What else?

Still something here. Oops, I don't have more watch. John. I can't tell you what time it is. I can't tell you what if I'm that careful, I'll lose my train of thought here.

I want to see listening to you. Okay, what else along that line? When you go through your daily life, your daily living, do you ever stop and look and see the things that God is doing in your life?

Yeah. You know, we take what he shows us in his word and then see how he applies that to our life by what he is doing, actively doing around us and among us and in us.

[29:34] Yeah. And he is. And that's the thing we've got to recognize. You know, God is always involved in our life and in our living and for us to really know him.

And that's why it's good to be in the word of God early in the day so you can go out through the rest of your day with what God showed you in his word.

And see if there's something he does in accordance to what he showed you in his word today. And then when you see it because you're looking for it, all of a sudden, oh, the proverbial light bulb comes on.

Yeah. All right. So that I may know him as as fully as I can by experience.

All right. And that, you know, there's another aspect to that is, and that is, we get to be to that point when we get to be like him.

[30:48] Amen. Or become being like him. It's scary. it's scary around our house sometimes when Calvita and I discover how much alike we've become in some things.

You know, we don't even have to answer one another. You know, we know the answer. you know, and that's what the Spirit of God is endeavoring to do in our life, is to make us like Christ.

Now, we won't come to that fullness until we go to be with him, but that process is in action now.

And the more we become like Christ, the more then we know him.

And the more we know him, the more we rejoice in him, and the more we then love him more and more. Now, that I may know him by experience, and the power of his resurrection.

Paul literally saying here, he wants the power that raised Jesus from the dead at operation within his life. Not so that he can be raised from the dead, that's a given.

[32:07] But he wants that power so that he can have victory over sin, and he can accomplish the purposes of God in his life.

All right? Producing the graces of Christ within him. Now, to know the power of his resurrection, and, here's the kicker, the fellowship of his suffering.

Yeah. Fellowship, co-participation in the common endeavor, the fellowship of his sufferings. Not the sufferings on the cross, but his suffering for righteousness' sake, in his life, in his living, and in his ministry.

Kind of wonder if, kind of wonder if the fact that Paul persecuted him, and his followers, so harshly, doesn't play a part in that aspect of his desire here.

I want to, I want to be a co-participant in his suffering. He writes that, is it in the book of Galatians later on? Someplace. Where we fill up the sufferings of Christ.

[33:21] No, it's later on. Fill up the suffering of Christ. In other words, we have our part, continue on, the ministry of Christ, and that includes his suffering.

Yeah. Yeah. How many of God's people, and I, and I realize here, he talks about suffering for righteousness' sake. But how many of us, as God's people, complain when we suffer?

Amen? Yeah, yeah, you make that statement. I was, I was, uh, thinking, when my daughter, Darla, uh, went to Hawaii, went there to, uh, work with the General Convention of Hawaii there, and, uh, uh, I would call her, and I would tease her, about suffering for Jesus in Hawaii.

And she was quick to reprimand me. I said, Dad, you got to realize something. When it comes to living on the island, you either love it, or you hate it.

Because there's water all around you, and there you are. And some people have a really hard time with that. Now, she didn't, but I said, okay, dear, I understand, but you're still suffering for Jesus.

[34:50] In Hawaii, yeah, yeah. But, uh, but, to suffer for righteousness' sake, uh, we need to realize, that's part of our Christian experience.

And we're to learn from that, all right? To know the fellowship of his sufferings, being made then conformable unto his death. Now, what he's saying is, when all of these things are a reality in his life, then he can say, I've been made then, brought to conformity to the death of Christ.

Now, what is he talking about here? He's not talking about the physical death here. He's talking about, in reality, death to himself. All right?

So that he can get rid of himself, being self-emptying, like he talks about the Lord Jesus, I think, in what, in chapter 2? Let this mind be in you, which is also in Christ Jesus.

And he talks about the self-emptying of Christ in his earthly ministry. That that's what he wants in his life.

[35:57] So, being made conformable unto his death, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Now, I'm not talking about the resurrection physical, like, you know, we talk about, we know was a reality because of our relationship to Christ.

All right? But it's literally an out-resurrection here. Relating to Ephesians chapter 2, you know, hit a blank.

We were all, you know, he has, you know, he has quickened us, made us alive, who were dead in the realm of trespasses and sins.

All right? Dead, but made alive. That's resurrection. That's spiritual resurrection. And Paul said, I want that a reality in my life to the fullest extent that it can be.

Having an inner heart life, but also having the outward expression resurrection of that resurrected life. Again, Romans chapter 6, we're dead with Christ, but we were raised together with him in newness of life.

[37:18] All right? The idea here is it's the most radical conformity to the death of Christ in that self emptying of our own lives in that spiritual resurrection.

Now, I'm about to wind up here because time's about over. Not as though I had already another verse 12. I'm always, when I read this, I'm always, I'm always intimidated by Paul.

I am. I mean, look what he says. You see his great desire here to know Christ. And you look at his life, you look what he went through for the Lord Jesus and how God used him, you see the letters of encouragement and reprimand and so forth that he writes.

And then he has the audacity to say to us, not as though I had already attained. You know, he said, I've not already come to the point where there's no more room for growth.

Boy, if he could say that, where are we at? Amen? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But, notice, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, as spiritually matured, you know, without room for continued growth.

[38:45] But here's what I do. But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ. To apprehend means literally just to reach up and pull down.

All right? Paul said, Paul said, God has, no, reached down. Yeah. God has reached down and grabbed a hold of me, apprehended me.

And so he said, and it's for a purpose. And so Paul says, I want to reach up and apprehend whatever it is, he reached a hold of me for and apprehended me.

I want to know that, he said. Now, when he writes to the church at Galatia in chapter 1, in verses 15 and 16, here's what he says. He kind of gets an idea here. But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen.

So he gets the idea of why God apprehended him. But he wants to be sure, absolutely positive, that whatever that was, he wants to grab a hold of it so he can know it and fulfill that.

[40:04] Amen? That's where we need to be sure we are. To know him, to have the fullness of his graces and operation within us, and then to apprehend, get a hold of whatever it is, he's gotten a hold of us for.

Again, God didn't save us just to get us to heaven. Now, he has the divine purpose for doing what he did in our lives, and we need to recognize what that purpose is.

Now, so, verse 13, brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do. Look at this, forgetting those things which are behind, those things I've already counted loss, forgetting about them, not looking back for the Christian, not looking back at past sins, not looking back at hopes and desires that have been thwarted, no, not looking back at those.

You've got the picture of the runner here, you know, for runners smart, knows what he's doing. He runs, he doesn't look back, if he looks back, he slows down, and somebody's love to overtake him. So, he said, forgetting those things that are behind, reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark.

[41:49] You ever watched a runner run? You know, he's going like this, he's reaching, and that's the idea. All right?

Now, what do they do when they get right there at the goal line, the goal line, the finish line? Yeah, yeah, they want to be the first one. They don't go, yay!

No. They either got their head forward like a racehorse, or they're reaching, so he'll be first. All right? And that's the picture here. That finish line is the goal, and he's pressing, he's pressing toward that, all right?

And I press forward for the mark of the prize, the goal that I've set for the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus.

The calling that God has set in my life. Now, look at verse 15 quickly, I know it's time. Let us therefore as many as be perfect, or, you know, there's different levels of spiritual maturity in life.

[43:03] Talking about those that are higher spiritual category. If therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded, minded, and if in anything you be otherwise minded, God shall reveal this even unto you.

Nevertheless, whereunto we already have attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. No matter what our level of spiritual maturity is, together, we are to do the same thing. And I think the same thing he's talking about here is what the heart and mind of Paul spoke of. to come to knowing to the fullest degree that we can by setting aside, counting but loss, the things, the fleshly things, the earthy things, that cling to our lives that we feel and felt are beneficial to us.

Amen? All right. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your love for us. I thank you, Lord, that not only have you saved us through your precious son, but you've given us the privilege and the ability to know you, to know him.

You've shown us in your word how that's to be done. And Lord, I pray that you'll enable us to see as Paul saw the dire cost of clinging to those things of the flesh and not relinquishing those so that we can appropriate Christ as fully as possible.

[44 : 45] So speak to our heart of that. Enable us to do that then by the power of God at operation within us by your spirit. And we'll thank you for it in Jesus' name.
Amen. God bless you all. Thank you.