

## **The Glory of Knowing Christ Philippians 3:1-11**

My (Tony) parents recently brought me four tubs of stuff that I used to value. The contents included baseball cards, trophies, a letterman's jacket, and more sports related material. They were tired of having my former treasures fill up their storage space. As I looked through these things, I was first excited. Then I stepped back and evaluated the whole thing. Here was eighteen years of my life.... placed into four plastic tubs. It was pretty sobering. I used to spend countless hours playing sports, and trading baseball cards. While I'm thankful for my childhood days and for my days playing sports, I really wish I had some different goals growing up. I wish I would have lived with Philippians 3 in mind.

What do you treasure? Is there anything of surpassing value? Is there anything that deserves our life-long, passionate pursuit? The answer is "yes." Paul describes it in verse 8:

*More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. (Phil 3:8)*

Paul reminds us that nothing on earth compares to knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. You will never regret pursuing Christ.

I (Francis) took my wife with me to Memphis for a speaking engagement. Nothing is more romantic than being near Elvis. It's amazing at how crazy people are over this person, who is dead. In Philippians 3, Paul has crazy love for Jesus, who is alive. This is the love we need also.

This passage is extremely important because it tells us what it means to know Jesus; what it means to find eternal salvation and ultimate satisfaction in life. Paul describes what a Christian isn't, what a Christian is, and how one can become a Christian. So, if you're reading this commentary, and you're unsure as to whether or not you are a Christian, I pray that this passage would change your life as you consider it carefully.

Elsewhere in the Bible, the idea of "knowing Christ" or having the "knowledge of God" involves the idea of salvation. Jesus said these very important words in John 17:

*This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent Jesus Christ. (Jn 17:3)*

So salvation is about knowing Jesus. It doesn't mean to merely know *about* Him. It means that you have a relationship with Him. And those who know Christ want to know Him better and better. Consider Paul. The risen Christ appeared to him and totally changed his life (Acts 9:1-9), as he describes in several places in the NT (cf., 1 Tim 1:12-17; Gal 1:11-17). Now, some thirty years later, he still wants to know Christ more and more.

**No Trouble to Me, Safe For You (3:1)**

This passage is also important because it reminds believers of their need to stay focused on the true Gospel of Jesus. As mentioned, salvation isn't about knowing some things about Jesus. But it's also not about doing religious things to be accepted by Jesus. This text really speaks against the problem of *legalism*; that is, the temptation to derive your justification before God, your acceptance by God, and forgiveness from God by your own religious works. We're reminded here that you can't earn salvation. It's a gift to be received. But even Christians, have a tendency to forget the Gospel daily. They have a tendency to revert back to legalism, as the book of Galatians so powerfully points out (cf., Gal 3:1-9). Legalism is self-atonement. It's a self-salvation project that only leads to pride or despair. We must resist the gospel of human achievement.

Paul begins the chapter saying, "Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you" (3:1, ESV). Many like to compare Paul's word "Finally" to contemporary preachers who seem to never know when to end a sermon. But the word could be translated something like "So then" (Carson, 80). Paul isn't indicating that he's finished with the letter. He's only half way through it. He's picking up the theme of "rejoicing" (2:17-18), and carrying on the idea of emulation. Here, he's providing an example that includes a passion to know Christ Jesus as Lord.

Paul says that he's told the Philippian congregation the "same things" before. He's probably referring to what he taught them in person. Previously, he taught them the Gospel. Now he's still teaching them the Gospel. Paul says it's no trouble for him to repeat these things, and it's safe for the congregation. In other words, the church would be protected from legalism and false gospels by studying the true Gospel.

Every church should be a "same things church." Oh, we must change some ministry methods, but the message must never change. And the "same thing" has numerous implications, but we must be about the same things, namely the truths of the Gospel. We must constantly remind one another of the Gospel, rehearse the Gospel, sing the Gospel, and proclaim the Gospel not only for the good of the unbeliever, but for the building up of the believer. This is an expression of love for one another. If you're a teacher, don't grow cold to the Gospel. Look at Paul's example here. It doesn't trouble him to remind them of what it means to know Christ. It's an expression of his love for the Philippian congregation. And it protects them.

To understand what it means to know Christ, and to understand what we must avoid, let's look at this text in two parts: (1) marks of those who know Christ, and (2) how to know Christ. By understanding these things, and by embracing Christ, we too can "rejoice in the Lord."

### **Marks of Those Who Know Christ (3:2-6)**

Paul provides three distinguishing marks of a genuine Christian in verse 3. They are contrasted with what he says in verse 2.

*Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—(Phil 3:2-3, ESV).*

For those of you who like dogs, you must realize that Paul had a different context. Dogs weren't viewed as cute little pets. They were nasty, unclean, and dangerous. They often wandered where they didn't belong. Paul viewed these false teachers like dogs. They were entering the church, and damaging it.

These particular teachers were known as "Judaizers." During the time of the early church, many devout Jews were willing to accept Jesus as Messiah, but they wanted to hold on to forms of Judaism. They believed that the Gentiles must become Jews first. That involved the act of circumcision and taking on the law of Moses (Carson, 81). We read about them in Acts 15. They were saying, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1b). But the leaders of the church, including Paul, Barnabas, James, and Peter denied this claim, and preserved the Gospel of grace. Salvation comes through Christ and Christ alone, apart from works of the law.

What's striking about the reference to dogs is that the Jews often called the Gentiles "dogs" because they viewed them as unclean (cf., Mark 7:28-29). But Paul states that a dramatic reversal has taken place through the work of Christ. Now it's the Judaizers that must be regarded as dogs.

He calls the Judaizers "evildoers" and "mutilators of the flesh." They were evildoers because their mission was evil, not good. Their mission wasn't heroic, but hellish. We're reminded here that false teachers have missionaries too. Just because someone goes on a mission trip, doesn't mean they're to be commended. If they're exporting a distorted Gospel, then they're dangerous and deadly.

The phrase "mutilators of the flesh" speaks against the value of circumcision. They were trusting in a physical operation, instead of God's gracious work of salvation in Christ. Silva says, "Here in Philippians Paul takes the Judaizers' greatest source of pride and interprets it as the surest sign that they have no share among God's people" (148). When Gentiles accepted this pressure to be circumcised in order to gain God's blessing, they were acting like pagans, who also mutilated the flesh in order to gain the favor of the gods (Hanson, 220). They didn't need mutilation, they needed regeneration.

About fifteen years ago or so we used to sing the song, "Who let the dogs out?" It was sort of light-hearted song. But this is no laughing matter in Philippi. Who let these dogs out? Answer: the evil one. The devil would want to destroy people's confidence in Christ's sufficient work. He would like nothing more than to have people believe in a false gospel. So beware of dogs.

Like physical dogs, there are all sorts of spiritual dogs. Many dogs do the same thing that these Judaizing dogs were doing, namely, adding to the Gospel. When you add to the Gospel,

you lose the Gospel! It's not Jesus + your good works (whatever your own version of good works may be). It's Christ and Christ alone.

In verse 3a, Paul says, "we are the circumcision," to speak not of a circumcision of the flesh, but that of a changed heart. At the end of his letter to the Galatians he says it like this:

*For both circumcision and uncircumcision mean nothing; what matters instead is a new creation (Gal 6:15).*

While Paul was a circumcised Jew, most in the Philippian congregation were Gentiles. Paul is saying that those who trust in Christ are the true people of God; they are "the true circumcision." Following this statement, he provides three distinguishing marks of a Christian, of the true people of God. The first two statements are positive and the third is noted negatively.

### **Mark #1: We Worship By the Spirit of God**

Paul tells the church that true believers "worship by the Spirit of God" (3b). When Paul uses the word "worship," he isn't speaking of simply that which we do on a Sunday morning gathering. He's speaking of "service" as the HCSB translates it. He's talking about a life devoted to God in spiritual service (cf., Rom 12:1).

True Christians possess the Spirit. Paul says to the Christians in Rome, "You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God lives in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him" (Rom 8:9). When Jesus spoke to the Woman at the Well in John 4, He said something very similar, saying, "[T]rue worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (Jn 4:23).

Does the Spirit of God dwell in you? Do you worship/serve God by the Spirit? On what are you basing your assurance of salvation? Don't base it on attendance to meetings, or in involvement in social work. Rest and rejoice in the fact that the Spirit of God dwells in you, enabling you to worship and serve God for the praise of His glory.

### **Mark #2: We Glory in Christ Jesus**

Paul adds that the true people of God "glory in Christ Jesus" (3c). Our boast is in Christ alone! Again our minds are drawn to Galatians, particularly where Paul famously says it like this:

*But as for me, I will never boast about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The world has been crucified to me through the cross, and I to the world. (Gal 6:14)*

We don't glory in our earthly status, in our achievements, or in our gifts. Personal boasting in salvation is excluded for the Christian, for salvation has come to us through the work of another, as a gift of a sovereign and gracious God (Rom 3:27, Eph 2:8-9). We must then

boast only in Christ. To the Corinthians Paul says, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Cor 1:31)

If you meet someone who claims to be a Christian but isn't making much of Christ, then you have reason to be suspicious of their claim. The Christian life is a Christ-exalting life. Do you boast in Christ around your friends? Do you glory in Christ Jesus in your ministry publically? Do you use your platform to make much of Christ Jesus our Lord? Churches can be known for all sorts of things. Let's be known for boasting in Christ!

### **Mark #3: We Put No Confidence in the Flesh**

The final mark is related to the second. He says, that the people of God "put no confidence in the flesh" (3d). This is simple enough. Everyone has their confidence somewhere. The Christian's confidence is in Christ, not their own effort or goodness. That is why the Christian boasts in Christ, and rejoices in Christ.

The human heart is prone to trust in other things, instead of Christ for salvation. But this important passage reminds us that our tribe doesn't provide us with any confidence of being able to stand before God's awesome presence. When it comes to being accepted before a holy God, your nationality doesn't matter; your rituals don't matter; your education doesn't matter. We can stand safely, securely, and confidently before God because of the work of another – Christ.

Where is your confidence? What will enable you to stand before God and receive His grace instead of His judgment? In what are you trusting? There's only one place to look, according to Paul.

So here are three marks of a Christian. We worship by the Spirit of God. We boast in Christ Jesus. We put no confidence in the flesh. If you aren't a Christian, consider now the testimony of Paul, as he details his own former life before meeting the risen Christ. You too can turn from trusting in false saviors and place your faith in Christ alone for salvation.

The Judaizers appealed to their impressive Jewish credentials, so Paul now flashes his own credentials, which were unparalleled. He says, "If you want to brag, I can brag even more!" His point in doing this is to show the Philippians of the emptiness of fleshly confidence. He will contrast this "salvation by human achievement" with a "salvation by Christ's achievement," and call his former life of Judaism "rubbish."

He begins by saying:

*although I once also had confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: (Phil 3:4).*

Paul could boast in his own religious privileges and accomplishments, for he had many! His list includes four items pertaining to his birth privileges as a Jew, and the second three draw attention his own religious achievements. He says:

*circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless. (Phil 3:5-6)*

Now that's a list! These qualities were impressive to those like the Judaizers, but Paul says he has no confidence in them for providing salvation. As we briefly consider them, we can identify eight sources of false confidence. While we can't make a one for one correlation between Paul's self-portrait and contemporary non-Jewish, religious people, surely we can make some general applications for people today who aren't trusting in Christ alone for eternal life.

***Don't put your confidence in a ritual.*** Paul says that he was "circumcised on the eighth day" (3:5a) Paul was an "eighth-dayer." He wasn't a Jewish proselyte. His circumcision was done in a first class way (Gen 17:12). Those who were converts to Judaism could never claim to have been circumcised on the eighth day.

Today, people may put their confidence in other spiritual rituals, like being baptized as an infant, or attending religious meetings. These experiences aren't grounds for spiritual confidence. Paul went through this famous Jewish ritual, but he considered it of no advantage. Salvation is about becoming a new creation in Christ, not about going through a particular ritual. Look to the One who is the substance of the shadows. (Col 2:17)

***Don't put your confidence in your race.*** Next in his self-portrait, he says that he was "of the nation of Israel" (3:5b). This phrase means of the "race of Israel" (Hanson, 223). Paul was a physical descendent of Abraham. He was no Gentile convert to Judaism, but the real thing. Yet, this special privilege didn't give him reason for assurance of salvation. He had to look to the offspring of Abraham, namely Christ.

***Don't put your confidence in your rank.*** He goes on to add that he wasn't only an Israelite, but he belonged to "the tribe of Benjamin" (3:5c). Paul didn't come from a disrespected Israelite tribe, but from this distinguished tribe. When the Promised Land was divided among the twelve tribes, Jerusalem, the holy city, was in Benjamin's territory. When the kingdom split, Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty. Yet, Paul says, as proud as that could make a Jew, it was of no ultimate value for granting one salvation.

Many who are exalted in the world today will one day be humbled because they've failed to bow the knee to Christ. Salvation isn't by your rank. It comes by trusting in the David's greatest son, Jesus Christ.

***Don't put your confidence in your tradition.*** Traditions can be fine in and of themselves, but you should place no confidence in them when it comes to salvation. Being a traditionalist is of no more value than being a progressive if you aren't focused on Jesus. Paul calls himself a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (3:5d). While he was fluent in Greek, he didn't abandon his Hebrew culture. He was fluent in Hebrew and devoted to his traditional culture.

We too can't rely on your cultural heritage or family tradition for salvation. I've met a lot of people that I've invited to corporate worship over the years, who have claimed that their entire family was of a particular religious group. We must tell them, don't trust in tradition. You must trust in the ultimate Hebrew, Jesus Himself.

***Don't put your confidence in your rule-keeping.*** Next, Paul begins the category of self-effort. Paul says regarding the law he was a "Pharisee" (5e). They loved their rules. Their name comes from an Aramaic term denoting "the separated ones" (Hanson, 226). They even added to all the commands of the Bible. So much so, that it was hard to know what the actual biblical commands were. That's who Paul was. He adopted a Pharisaical lifestyle. He belonged to a morally superior group Jews.

You will meet people today who think that salvation comes by being a moral person. To be clear, I'm not encouraging rule-breaking. We must simply note that rule keeping won't earn salvation. Many have the idea that moral people will go to heaven. It's still around today, and is the default mode of the human heart.

I was at the bedside of a family member recently. In his dying days, I was trying to explain the Gospel to him. I read to him Ephesians 2:8-9 and talked about salvation as a gift of grace. His response was at first "I was in the Boy Scouts." That's fine, but keeping the code of some group doesn't merit eternal life. It didn't for Paul as a Pharisee, and won't for us either. Salvation isn't by rule keeping.

***Don't put your confidence in your zeal.*** We certainly hear this claim today: "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you are sincere and really believe it." Well, it would be hard to fathom anyone more "sincere" than the Saul of Tarsus. He wasn't a Pharisee in name only. He was zealous. He says, "regarding zeal, persecuting the church" (6a). Regarding his pre-conversion life, to the Galatians, he says, "I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors" (Gal 1:14b). His zeal was expressed through his persecution of the church (Acts 8:3; 9:1; 22:4-6; 26:10-11). To the Corinthians he said that only by the grace of God could he be forgiven of such sin (1 Cor 15:9-10).

Salvation doesn't come by passion. There are people passionate about lots of things. It comes by knowing the real man of zeal, Jesus Christ. People can be sincere, but be sincerely wrong. Paul told the Romans that some have "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom 10:2). One must know Christ; one must be "found in Him" (Phil 3:9).

***Don't put your confidence in your obedience to the law.*** Paul wraps up his religious resume saying that "as regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless" (6b). While Paul isn't claiming sinless perfection, he is saying that his life was exemplary when it came to obeying the OT law. He was self-righteous person, who boasted in his ability to keep God's law, like the Rich Young Ruler. Later in verse 9, however, Paul will talk about the need for the righteousness of another – Christ. Salvation is comes through the obedience of another, through the work of another – Christ. While Paul's public record of moral performance was stellar, he later placed it in the loss column.

This phrase contrasted with verse 9, “a righteousness that comes from God that depends on faith” summarizes the difference between Christianity and other world religions. Other systems promote works based righteousness, but the Gospel is about imputed righteousness. It’s about receiving Christ’s righteousness as our own. The most sincere and religious person can’t keep God’s law. We need Christ. He lived the life we should have lived, and then died the death that lawbreakers should have died.

Let me ask you again, “Where is your confidence?” Are you trusting in your rituals, your race, your rank, your tradition, your rule-keeping, your zeal, or your obedience to the law? Paul says that a genuine Christian puts no confidence in these things. Our confidence lies in another – Christ. Put your trust in Him! Paul goes on to tell us more about what this means in the next four verses.

### **How to Know Christ (3:7-11)**

Now, Paul transitions with some remarkable verses as to what it looks like to truly know Christ in saving way. Silva calls this section “the essence of Pauline theology” (155). At the center is Christ. Paul mentions Christ by name or pronoun nine times in five verses. Knowing Christ is his supreme ambition.

*But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith. My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead. (Phil 3:7-11)*

In verse 7, Paul says that everything that he thought was in the credit column (his list of privileges and accomplishments in verses 5-6), has been transferred to the debit column. Only Christ remains in the credit column. He repeats himself with stronger force in verse 8. He just didn't count all lost; he lost it all!

Paul calls his religious accomplishments “filth” or “rubbish” (ESV) or “dung” (KJV) compared to knowing Christ. Paul uses a term that sometimes referred to animal or human excrement. At the risk of sounding crass, he says it’s all dog crap compared to knowing Christ. The vulgarity of the term is deliberate, as Paul wants to strike us with the worthlessness of life apart from Jesus. You can have the Bread of Life that will eternally satisfy or you can have a pile of dung. Which do you prefer: the dung of religious self-efforts and earthly praise and possessions, or the eternal joy of knowing Christ as your Savior and Lord? Paul made his decision, and he’s trying to help others choose wisely. One may here an echo from Jesus’ question, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” (Matt 16:26, ESV).



This zealous Pharisee turned into the zealous missionary for Christ. This same Christ he persecuted (Acts 9), became his Savior, Lord, and treasure. Because of his conversion to Christ, Paul “lost all things.” You might say he traded a list of accomplishments, for a list of afflictions. He lost friends, intellectual peers, his home, his security, his status and more. In place of these things, he received the following:

*Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.*

*Are they servants of Christ? I’m talking like a madman—I’m a better one: with far more labors, many more imprisonments, far worse beatings, near death many times.*

*Five times I received 39 lashes from Jews.*

*Three times I was beaten with rods by the Romans. Once I was stoned by my enemies.*

*Three times I was shipwrecked. I have spent a night and a day in the open sea.*

*On frequent journeys, I faced dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my own people, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the open country, dangers on the sea, and dangers among false brothers;*

*labor and hardship, many sleepless nights, hunger and thirst, often without food, cold, and lacking clothing.*

*Not to mention other things, there is the daily pressure on me: my care for all the churches.*

*Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? (2 Cor 11:22-29)*

Now that’s a list! Understand that Paul isn’t complaining here. For Paul was committed to Christ, and viewed everything done in His name as “gain.” On the one side of the page is *loss* or *rubbish* – his former life of Judaism with all its privileges and accomplishments. On the other side of page is gain – where Christ alone stands. The gain side of the page is infinitely better to Paul, even though it meant great sacrifice.

Verse 9 is extremely important for understanding how one becomes a Christian – you need Christ’s righteousness. Verses 10-11 are extremely important for understanding what a Christian pursues – you need to know Christ more and more. To use theological language, verse 9 speaks of *justification*. Verse 10 speaks of *sanctification*. Verse 11 speaks of *glorification*. If you aren’t a Christian, you need to be justified, counted righteous before God. Otherwise you face condemnation. If you’re a Christian, you, like Paul, need to pursue a better knowledge of Christ in this life-long process of sanctification, which culminates in eternal glorification.

### **Justification: Trust Christ Alone as Your Righteousness (9)**

In verse 9, Paul says:

*and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ —the righteousness from God based on faith. (Phil 3:9)*

In his list of accomplishments, Paul said that “as to righteousness” he was “blameless” (6). However, he couldn’t live up to sinless perfection. He, like us, needed someone else’s righteousness in order to be justified before God. You see, here’s the problem. Only righteous people are going to heaven. Yet, none of us are righteous (Rom 3:9-18). Therefore, we need another source of righteousness. And that’s why the Gospel is good news. For as Paul says here in Philippians 3 and elsewhere, believers have received the righteousness that comes from God through faith in Christ alone (cf., Rom 3:21-26). We call this “imputed righteousness.” This is the opposite of works-based righteousness, or self-righteousness. That’s all rubbish. We need the righteousness of another, an alien righteousness. We need God’s righteousness. To the Corinthians, Paul says:

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21, ESV)*

What a glorious exchange! Christ received our punishment, though he never sinned. And we received His righteousness though we didn’t deserve it. Consequently now, we are found in Christ. That means that God sees them through the righteousness of Christ. Believers are now protected from judgment, and can know that they have forgiveness from God and are accepted by God. No better news exists.

To break this down further, notice how Paul quickly makes two important points in Philippians 3:9 regarding this “justification” or this “righteousness.” *First, justification is a gift from God.* Paul says that this righteousness comes “from God.” We can’t earn it, and we don’t deserve it. God in infinite grace gave His only Son to live and die for law-breaking people that they may be saved. *Secondly, justification is received by faith.* Paul says it clearly, doesn’t he? And he actually says it twice, “but one that is through faith in Christ —the righteousness from God based on faith.” (3:9b). Salvation doesn’t depend on any your record, your rank, your race, your religious attendance, your good deeds, etc. It depends on faith alone in Christ’s perfect work alone. Justification is God’s work, secured by Christ’s death, and appropriated by faith.

This is what it means to be a Christian. This is what it means to know Christ. This is what it means to have your values in the right place. Carson says, “Paul recognizes that in God’s universe, the most important thing is to know God” (86). Knowing Christ as your Lord is more important than politics, sports, movies, social media, and even family. And we come to know Him, by looking away from our selves, and looking to Christ as our righteousness.

You should see now how infinite different Christianity is from other religions. In other systems, you have to do the work. In Christianity, Christ did the work. We rejoice in those wonderful words, “It is finished!” (Jn 19:30), which is just one word in Greek, but it’s loaded with meaning, and I dare say we will be pondering it for all eternity.

So, will you look to Christ as your righteousness? Do not trust in your own goodness. Many people think they're somewhere between Mother Theresa and Ted Bundy, and that God somehow grades on a curve. Consider Paul. He said as to righteousness under the law, he was blameless, yet he discovered that he was under the judgment of God and needed Christ's righteousness. We need this righteousness also.

If you are a Christian, then remind yourself of this good news daily, through reading the Bible, meeting with other Christians, by meditating on good books, and by singing Gospel-saturated songs. Graham Kendrick wrote a beautiful song based (presumably) on this passage:

All I once held dear, built my life upon  
All this world reveres, and wars to own  
All I once thought gain I have counted loss  
Spent and worthless now, compared to this

Knowing you, Jesus  
Knowing you, there is no greater thing  
You're my all, you're the best  
You're my joy, my righteousness  
And I love you, Lord

Now my heart's desire is to know you more  
To be found in you and known as yours  
To possess by faith what I could not earn  
All-surpassing gift of righteousness

Oh, to know the power of your risen life  
And to know You in Your sufferings  
To become like you in your death, my Lord  
So with you to live and never die

I think the apostle Paul would have enjoyed this song! I pray you can sing it as well.

### **Sanctification: Know Christ More and Become More Like Him (10)**

In verse 10, we find that Paul didn't adopt an attitude like, "I've arrived spiritually." He never got bored with knowing Jesus. As believers, we too need to press on to know Him. He writes:

*My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (3:10)*

Of course, Paul does know Christ, but because of his love for the Savior, he wants to know Him more. Is there a better example for believers than this? Paul says, "Join in imitating me" in Philippians 3:17. As we observe his life, we see an all-consuming passion to know Christ. He sounds like David in Psalm 63, whose passion was to seek after God, and be satisfied in Him.

Dr. Stan Norman was one of my (Tony) favorite professors in seminar. His Systematic Theology class was incredible. I used to say “We should type notes on our knees” because the content was so worshipful at times. In one of Dr. Norman’s classes, the subject of the day involved the resurrection from the dead, and the deep implications of it. In the midst of dealing with this subject, a frustrated student said, “I didn’t come here to study this stuff. All I want to do is to know how to pastor a big church.” Dr. Norman didn’t like this response to put it mildly. Nor should he have been pleased. To think that you can pastor, and not need to know about the Christ, His resurrection, and how it applies to people’s lives is foolish. Paul says this is of first importance (1 Cor 15:3-5)! This student’s attitude didn’t reflect the life of the apostle Paul who considered everything as dung compared to knowing Jesus. He should have realized that the very reason he was in seminary was to know Christ more and to become more like Him.

J.I. Packer put it well: “Once you become aware that your main business here in life is to know Christ, then most of life’s problems fall into place” (?). What do you think your main business in life is? Pastor a big church? Make money? Get married? Be entertained? Everything in life flows from this fountain: knowing Christ. What do you want to pass on to your kids? Alistair Begg said a man once quipped to him, “When I was young I had six theories and no kids. Now I have six kids and no theories” (in DeYoung *Crazy Busy*, 74).

Specifically, Paul mentions knowing Christ and “the power of his resurrection,” and “the fellowship of His sufferings being conformed to His death.” Let’s unpack this.

We should first note that believers have the same power that raised Jesus from the dead (cf., Eph 1:19). This power is at work within us that we may will and work according to God’s pleasure (Phil 2:13). This power is at work within us to make us holy. This power is at work within us to help us understand God’s great love and mercy. This power gives us strength to endure life’s hardships (cf., Col 1:11-12).

But Paul wants more. At this point, everyone may be “amening!” You might say, “Yeah, I want to know Christ. Yeah, I want the power of Christ.” But we may be tempted to skip this next line, and jump to the resurrection part. We must not skip over this line about suffering because we’ll miss something very important.

Paul says that he wants to know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. Earlier, he told the Philippians that we have been given the gift of suffering for Christ (Phil 1:29). This flies in the face of prosperity theology that says if you have faith you will be healthy, wealthy, and will have no trials. Many don’t understand this about Christianity. When I (Francis) became a Christian in high school no one told me about suffering on behalf of Christ. I was raised with a version of Christianity that adopted a view that one could be a disciple but not look like Jesus. Paul corrects our understanding, and gives us an inspiring example to follow.

To be clear, we shouldn't read this like Paul enjoys suffering in and of itself. That's not what he means. Rather, he understands that to follow the man of sorrows, means that we too will encounter suffering and sorrow, and as we follow along this Calvary Road, we will know the Master better. If you want to know Christ more than anything in life, and it's through suffering for Him that you'll know Him better, than you won't mind suffering. It will be worth it! You will actually find joy in it (Acts 5:41).

### **Glorification: Anticipate Your Resurrection (11)**

Paul concludes this amazing passage of Scripture saying:

*assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead. (3:11)*

At first glance, Paul seems to be uncertain about his resurrection, but we should reconsider. He's either speaking modestly, over against the Judaizers and others who were guilt of an over realized eschatology (Witherington, 91), thinking the perfected state was in the present, or he is using "somehow" as Carson thinks:

The word "somehow" in the original probably suggests that Paul is uncertain as to *the timing* and *circumstances* of this experience. Might it come to him in his lifetime, so that he receives a transformed, resurrection body without passing through death? From his letter to the Thessalonians we learn that this is what Paul teaches will befall those believers who are alive when Jesus returns (1 Thess 4:13-17). Or will he die and then rise from the dead. Either way, 'somehow,' he will "attain the resurrection of the dead." And in Paul's mind, attaining that glorious end, the final resurrection, the new heaven and earth, the home of righteousness, is bound up with persevering in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. So for that knowledge of Christ he yearns (88-89, my emphasis).

We too should long for this "glorious end, the final resurrection" where we will see Christ. Paul concludes this chapter by giving us this hope:

*But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil 3:20-21)*

We have a taste of this glory now, but we have experienced the fullness of it yet. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6, ESV). When God redeems a person, He uses the same creative power that He used when He spoke the universe into existence. He shines in our hearts to give us the knowledge of Christ.

Later, more glory will be revealed. Habakkuk says, "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14, ESV). We await for our resurrected bodies, for our new home, and for an increased knowledge of Christ. Let this hope purify you (1 Jn 3:1-3). Let this hope encourage you in your sufferings (Rom 8:18-39). Let this hope help you put all things into perspective.

My (Tony) first mission trip was to Australia. I know, it was a hard location. Our team went to Sydney to do street evangelism during the Olympics. Then at one point, our leader asked me and three other guys to go lead a basketball clinic in a small town about five hours south, along the coast. We went, and had a very fruitful ministry there. Our hosts were locals. They treated us wonderfully. When we arrived, they showed us our rooms, and then took us to the ocean. I looked at this majestic ocean, which had this beautiful country side behind me. I saw dolphins jumping in this stunning scene of endless waves. The youngest member of the family then ask me if I wanted to get in. Of course I did. I began, like many do, by putting one toe in the water. Then I put a foot. Then I walked out to the ocean until I was swimming. But I never covered the bottomless glory of this ocean. There was so much more to know and to experience.

Paul is showing us in this passage that there's an ocean of glory in Christ Jesus for us to know and experience. He never grew stagnant or bored with knowing Christ. Instead, he wanted to know Him better and better. He traded his self-righteousness for God's perfect righteousness through faith in Christ. He possessed Christ's resurrection power. He knew Christ better and better by suffering for Christ, and thus rejoiced in suffering. And he anticipated a glorious resurrection that would enable him to know his Savior even more. So, let's not be content with putting a toe in the water. Let us pursue a deep relationship with Jesus Christ, and let's long for the day in which we see Him, the One with scars on His hands, who defeated death through His resurrection. For nothing on earth compares to knowing Christ Jesus our Lord.