

That I May Know Him

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 3. Talking about knowing him, knowing our Saviour. Philippians chapter 3 from verse 8 it reads, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, from whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and to count them but done that I may win Christ.

And 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.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Verse 10, that I may know him, Christ Jesus my Lord, and the power of his resurrection, the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Tonight we're just teasing out this theme of knowing Christ, of knowing the Saviour. The excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, he tells us there in verse 8.

[1 : 26] It's an excellency, there's a surpassing value to this. This is an excellent value. More than any gain that Paul knew, earlier in the chapter he talks about where he's come from, as he was circumcised the eighth day, he was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law of Pharisee.

He had all these things that were gain to him, but what those things that were gain to me, he says, those I counted loss for Christ. And so we see, what mattered to Paul was that I may know him. That was that which had the surpassing value, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. Not know about him, not know doctrine or teaching about him so much, but to know him, to know him.

To know the Saviour himself, to know him as Lord, to know him. And really it's a theme through the word of God. To know God is a recurring theme. One example, Jeremiah 9, the prophet says, Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might.

Let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth.

[2 : 55] For in these things I delight, saith the Lord. The Lord's saying through Jeremiah, Don't glory in your might, you that are mighty, your wisdom, you that are wise, or you're rich as you that are rich.

He says, glory in this, that you understand and know the Lord. That's something to glory in, that's something to rejoice in, isn't it? We can personally know God. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

His greatness is unsearchable. It's been said God is incomprehensible, but he is knowable. We can't understand him really, can we? It's unsearchable, the depths, to be able to comprehend who God is, is beyond our human comprehension, yet we can know him.

He is knowable. He's not the unknowable God. And to know God is to know eternal life, as we read in John 17, verse 3. As our Lord prayed for his church, this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

To know God is to know eternal life. So to know him is really a vital thing that we all will come to, I trust, to know him.

[4 : 09] We can know about someone. We might have some theoretical knowledge. We might know, for example, Prime Minister Albanese. We might know about him. We might know some of his history and some of the facts and figures about the Prime Minister, but we don't actually know him as a person.

It's the same, spiritually speaking, we can know about the Bible. We can know about God, about our Lord Jesus. But having that personal relationship with him is to know him, isn't it? And that's what Paul's talking about here. We can know him. We can know him. In three aspects I've put to you, we can know him. Firstly, we see we can know him. I'm taking it out of order from the text, but we can know him.

We could see, number one, in his sufferings. We can know his sufferings. And we're invited into this fellowship, the fellowship of his sufferings.

Wouldn't that be a name for a church, the fellowship of his sufferings? You had that on the front door of your building. To know the fellowship of his sufferings. What a fellowship. To consider his sufferings today.

[5 : 19] We think, as we are reminded often, to remember Calvary, the pathway to Calvary. We think of his sufferings. We consider that. We share in his pain.

And the early church knew his sufferings. This was the fellowship of his sufferings. We see, for example, the early church, as it said of them, in Acts 5, from verse 40, in part, it says, when they had called the apostles, this was the Sanhedrin, as they were grilling Peter, and the apostles, it says, when they had called them, and beaten them, it says, they commanded that they should not speak, in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy, to suffer shame for his name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

So here they were, they were beaten, they were commanded not to speak in his name, and yet they rejoiced in this. They counted themselves worthy, to suffer shame for his name.

When we think about it, really, and I know some of this theme is a bit alike, to what I shared this morning, about denying yourself, taking up your cross, following him, the privilege, really, we have, of being reproached for Christ.

[6 : 40] You know, as a believer, we know that we are outnumbered. Generally, in a workplace, we can be reproached, and reviled, as a Christian, as Christ was. It's the fellowship of his sufferings, isn't it?

Will we join this fellowship? This is no happy, clappy, flesh-pleasing fellowship. There's no entertainment, hoopla, and such a focus here. There's no health, wealth, and prosperity gospel, or success gospel here.

It's the fellowship of his sufferings, you know, that we would be followers of the Lamb. And this is the rugged communion, that we call to, isn't it? To be that church, that is withstanding, the tide of evil, that sweeps our land.

We read books like Fox's Book of Martyrs, and the record of the men and women of God, who stood tall against the apostasy of the time that they lived, and were willing to count the cost.

It's the fellowship of his sufferings, isn't it? We are that church, I trust. And Paul says, I counted all the valuable things that I had before, just as dumb, in comparison with knowing him.

[7 : 48] It was such a, the lowest of the low, you could consider it. All of the credentials that he had, he counted it as rubbish, as dumb, in comparison with knowing Christ.

And we as believers have that great privilege of knowing him, and not only being knowledgeable of him, but being made like him, and even more, to be entering into the fellowship of his sufferings.

To be able to carry a cross, to be able to bear some trial, and to walk in his steps, to take that suffering for his sake, giving way to him, and that difficult path at times, that denying of self.

Again, not wanting to repeat what I talked about over much this morning. But Paul tells the Philippians, don't be terrified of your adversaries. He says, for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

It's the fellowship of his sufferings. We should be willing to stand and be counted, to be such a people. Paul tells Timothy, if we suffer for him, we will also reign with him.

[8 : 57] It's that principle of first the cross, and then the crown. And we can expect time of suffering, of persecution, of tribulation, of trial.

Paul tells Timothy, yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution. So we shouldn't think it a strange thing, that we would have some persecution.

It doesn't say that all who live godly in Christ Jesus, will have an easy time of it. It doesn't say all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, will have a carefree life, no difficulties.

Timothy isn't told to expect God, to bring material blessing, and prosperity, but that faith will bring tests, faith will bring persecution. That's what we should expect.

It should be the normal Christian life, that we can be prepared for such. And of course we know Peter writes likewise, 1 Peter 4 verse 12, Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.

[10:05] But he says, But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also, with exceeding joy.

So again, Peter underlines the same theme, that we can expect some trial, we can expect to be partakers, or be fellowshippers, with Christ's sufferings.

It's a fellowship of suffering. It's the school of his suffering. It's taking stock of his sufferings. Let this be your fellowship. So, brother, sister, be encouraged, that if you're facing persecution, you're probably in the right place.

You're probably doing the right thing. Enjoy sweet communion, with your Saviour, who suffered in your stead. And to know him, not only it's a communion with him, a fellowship with him, a fellowship with his sufferings, but also, it tells of being made conformable, unto his death.

So, not only are we, in the fellowship of his suffering, is saying that we are to be conformable, unto his death. If we can envisage him there, and we can share in it, his death, his very death, we're called to be made conformable, unto his death.

[11:19] There's a conformity, that is good for us. Not a conforming to the world, but a conforming to the cross. As we choose the cross, to choose to die, to die to sin. We know that familiar passage, we often would remember, memorise, where Paul says, Galatians 2, verse 20, I am crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ, liveth in me. And the life which I now live, in the flesh, I live by the faith, of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Paul's saying, I am crucified with Christ. It's being made conformable, to his death, isn't it? That when Christ would live in me, I should be dead to the world. And we see elsewhere, he talks about the world is crucified, to me, and I, unto the world.

Think of the crucifixion, our Lord pictured it, as like a seed, that has to die, and then it brings forth fruit. There's a fruitfulness, as we surrender, to that spiritually dying, that dying to sin, to self, to flesh, there's a coming alive, that fruitfulness that comes.

And so for the early believers, being a Christian, meant being continually exposed to, actual death, for his sake, being ready to suffer, for their faith. Theirs was no glib token prayer, and a weekly pretense.

[12:45] This was no sham, or make believe. This was real, gutsy Christianity. And we should have that same heart, that same spirit, that same endeavour. Theirs was a life transforming work, that meant they were laying their very lives, on the line.

When you think of being conformable, to his death, what does that mean? In a spiritual sense, we conforming to Calvary, to the crucified life. Some writers have called it, the exchanged life, haven't they?

That we exchange our life, we exchange the rags of our, filthy righteousness, so called, with his perfect righteousness. The exchanged life, the transferred life, isn't it?

The crucified life, that we would be, living sacrifices, that we would put to death, the old sin nature, and that we would live, dedicated to, go to the furthest extent, of love, and compassion, and purpose, to be like our saviour, to have that, ultimate passion, that compassion, that is the cross. So here we've seen, our sweet communion, is with his very suffering, a fellowship with him, our blessed Lord. We see, as they are conforming, to his death, and our living a life, dead to sin.

[14:02] And then, on a brighter note, to know him, also means to experience, the power, of his resurrection. Seeing the sufferings, the death, and now, contemplate, the resurrection.

We live, the resurrected life, the resurrection life. We've got the power, of the resurrection, working in us. His resurrection power. We think, as we could reflect, of the women, with their sorrowful tread, they made their way, to the tomb.

When suddenly, an angel interrupts, and announces, the Lord is risen. They tell her, them, he is not here, for he is risen.

As he said, come, see the place, where the Lord lay. He's alive. He's risen. He's not here. He's raised to life. And, the Bible talks about, how, we can know him, and, the power, of his resurrection.

That's, Philippians 3, verse 9. We can, not only know him, but the power, of his resurrection. Think of the resurrection, what it means. The power of it.

[15:10] There, there really, is no greater power, than, the resurrection power. that our Lord, he laid down his life and he took it up again. We know the Spirit raised him, the Father raised him.

It was a trifold, triune work that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit were involved in raising Christ from the dead. It was the resurrection power, the glory of it, the victory of it over sin, over death and really what a demonstration of the almighty power of God and that speaks to us of the new life that he gives to us, that new life has begun by the power of the resurrection and we can know him and the power of his resurrection in our own life, as our own individual walk with God. We can have that sure hope, that glad hope, that certain assurance. It says 2 Timothy 1 verse 10 in part Paul tells how our Saviour, Jesus Christ had abolished death and had brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. He's abolished death, he's overcome death, he's broken the bars of death, hasn't he?

He's taken the keys of hell and of death and he's brought great victory, great resurrection power and for us that know the Saviour, for us death has been abolished, he's destroyed it, he's done away with it.

As one of our preachers this morning talked about, O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law.

[16:48] But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. We think of the resurrection, the power of his resurrection, there's ultimate victory there, isn't there?

There's absolute victory there, there's triumph there and we know that in our own walk with God, that regeneration, that new life, that eternal life, that our risen conquering Saviour extends to men to bring that new life to us.

And to know him is to know life, life more abundant and free, resurrection life, the life of God, the power of God, life with an eternal dimension and purpose.

He's alive, we serve a risen Saviour, amen? Not like some dead prophet or philosopher that's buried and still in the grave.

We serve a risen Saviour. He's alive and he's living in our hearts by faith. And he helps us to walk in newness of life. So that resurrection power, the power of his resurrection is something that we can know.

[17:51] As we know him, we can know that he has raised us up spiritually together with him, to be identified with him. He talks about how he's lifted us up, he's raised us up to be seated in heavenly places.

And so, brothers and sisters, we think of this truth of his resurrection power. It's the Holy Spirit's power that raised him from literal death. And that is the same power, the same power that works in us, that believe.

The same power which raises believers from spiritual death now and ultimately from physical death he will raise us again. We can know all kinds of things.

All kinds of things. But Paul says that I may know him. That I may know him. People these days, you think some of the useless things people know.

They know all the facts and figures about some silly sports team or some idle film star or music legend and they can rattle off all the dates and details or the scores of all the games in history past.

[19:04] Useless knowledge. Truly. Useless. Useless knowledge. Why would you fill your mind with anything like that? But rather that you would fill your mind with that which is useful knowledge, that which is spiritual knowledge, that's godly understanding, some people know all these astounding amounts of facts and figures about really, let's be honest, useless things.

Paul says that I may know him. That's what he wanted. That's what he counted as the most important thing. And even all of his religious qualifications, all of that which he could claim credit for from his lineage, from his learning, from the rabbis and the schools of knowledge that he'd been through, he said, it's just dung, it's just rubbish, it's nothing compared to this, the knowledge of my Lord, to know him.

And we can have that same really contrast, can't we? It's a total comparison of what really matters, of what really is valuable. And we know as the blind beggar was healed, he said, one thing I know, one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.

He knew. He used to be blind and now he says, I know, I can see. And we can say that, know the Saviour today, once I was lost, now I am found.

Once I was blind, now I can see. This one thing, one thing I know, and this is the one thing we must know, to know Jesus Christ, to know Jesus Christ, to know him, to know Christ and him crucified.

[20 : 48] And we can know the Saviour. We can know him, personally know him. You can know God. And even more, you can grow in that knowledge.

I think for some, they know and then they kind of leave it there. They, I know enough and they kind of leave it there. They don't keep growing in the knowledge. But as Peter writes to us, here as 2 Peter 3.18 reads, it says, he puts it, but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Grow in grace, grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and forever. Amen.

We can know the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith in the context as we read earlier. I'll just repeat those leading verses one more time here as we just reflect again.

Paul says, I count all things but loss. There's no value to them compared to the excellency of the knowledge. to know him, Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I've suffered the loss of all things and do count them but dumb, that I may win Christ, that I might gain Christ and be found in him, it says, not having my own righteousness.

[22 : 14] We can know the righteousness which is of God. It comes from God by faith. That's a wonderful thing, isn't it? Not only can we know him, be saved, but we can know his righteousness, his righteousness, not our own righteousness, Paul says, not having mine own righteousness, he says, but having his righteousness, the righteousness which is of God by faith and that I may know him, that I may know him.

Paul says, this is the one thing I count as important, as essential, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that your word tells us over and over again that we can know you. You tell us, be still and know that I am God.

We know that there are many who struggle in darkness, in unbelief, in doubt. we see many who can't come to that place of saying, I believe, I do know you, I do trust you.

Pray that each one might have that knowledge today, not a knowledge that is of our own making or working, but a righteousness and a knowledge that is by faith as we receive your word and take heart in the promises you give us and hear about your saving grace.

[23 : 52] Lord, that we can be part of that fellowship of your sufferings. Lord, that we won't be afraid to bear some measure of suffering this side of glory.

Lord, that we'll be like the suffering churches that are all around this globe where they count the cost and they pay the cost to be in that fellowship of your suffering.

Lord, that we might be made conformable to your death, that we won't be afraid to die to self, to die to sin, to die to the flesh, to die to the world and then, Lord, that we might know the power of your resurrection, that new life power, that Holy Spirit power, that rising to life power that tore the gates of hell, the bars of death, that held you in the grave, Lord, and the stone rolled away because of the power of your resurrection.

Lord, we thank you that we can know that power in our daily walk with you and that's the power that affects the righteousness that we need. It's not righteousness of our own making, of our own doing, of our own effort, but it's the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Lord, we pray each one might know that and know you and Lord, help us to keep growing in that knowledge, to grow in grace and to grow in the knowledge of you, our Saviour.

[25 : 13] Help us, Lord, to apply ourselves to know you more, to understand you more, that you would reveal the mysteries of your word as your Holy Spirit would enlighten our reading of it.

Lord, that you would lead us into truth and right doctrine in every aspect. Lord, we pray that you would be glorified in your church. Help us, Lord, to be that church even if it be the fellowship of your sufferings, Lord.

We can't really imagine what that really means in some quarters of the globe today, but yet, Lord, let us be such a people that will be firm and steadfast in the faith.

Lord, all to your praise and glory, we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen.