

New Year's Day Sermon January 2022

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[0 : 00] From the beginning down to verse 12. Philippians chapter 3 from the beginning down to verse 12.

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. 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. Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more.

Circumcised in the eighth day of the people of Israel. Of the tribe of Benjamin. A Hebrew of Hebrews. As to the law, a Pharisee. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church.

[1 : 02] As to righteousness under the law. Blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish. In order that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law. But that which comes through faith in Christ. The righteousness from God that depends on faith. That I may know him.

And the power of his resurrection. I may share his sufferings. Becoming like him in his death. That by any means possible, I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

God and his blessing to that reading from this holy word. Particularly, I want to draw your attention this morning to the words that we read in verses 10 to 11.

[2 : 12] Paul writes, I want to know Christ. The power of his resurrection. The fellowship of suffering. Sharing in his sufferings. Becoming like him in his death.

And so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. You know, at the cusp of a new year, we know that there are going to be changes ahead.

2022 is going to be no different at all. There are going to be new opportunities for you. There are going to be changes in circumstances. Changes in your family life.

Changes in personal life. Changes in the congregation's life. As we see changes in the world. In politics. In society. In the economy. But one thing absolutely must change.

And that's your attitude and my attitude to the Lord Jesus Christ. However long you've been a Christian. However long you've been in a saving relationship with the Lord Jesus.

[3 : 15] For you and for me. To make that resolution. Have a resolution of intent. To grow in your relationship with your Savior, the Lord Jesus.

And saying that, I must also say this. That ever long any of you have remained outside of Christ. The greatest resolution that you must make.

Is for your life to be transformed by the saving grace of the Lord Jesus. And we know that New Year's resolutions are still very much a picture of modern life.

As they've been for many, many centuries. Because nowadays the resolutions that seem to be the more frequent are resolutions concerning health.

Or diet. Or money. But surely the greatest of resolutions concerns your relationship with the Lord Jesus.

[4 : 11] And you know, for the Christian, surely it has to be that utmost relationship that you must meet. At the start of this year. That by the Lord's leading.

That you're brought closer to the Lord Jesus. Brought closer to Him. And further away from all these other lesser passions that, you know, so absorb our lives so often.

And again, speaking to any of you who are not yet believers. Not yet Christians. Make it your resolution. To open your heart to the Word of God.

And let the power of God's Word enter your heart. Enter your life. And have done with those lesser things. Done with those things that, you know, even in past years. As you thought would bring you happiness and contentment.

And you know, then nothing of the sort. It's that kind of thinking that the Apostle Paul once had in his particular religious upbringing.

[5 : 11] Things that he thought would bring him closer to God. But in fact, brought him no nearer. No nearer to the one true God. As we read there in the passage.

Paul at one time had prided himself in his legalistic adherence. His all his various practices. All his connections. His, you know, his adherence to the law.

Things that he thought would give him so much credit before God. Actually turned out, as he said, to be lost. And it was only by God's grace.

That Paul came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus whom he'd been persecuted when Paul persecuted the followers of the Lord Jesus. But now, Paul having that saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

He knows. His whole life had been turned around. Because knowing Jesus. Knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the most basic foundational aspect of saving faith.

[6 : 13] Because there's no salvation outside of Christ. Remember what Peter said when Peter was in trial? There's salvation in no one else. For there's no other name under heaven given among men.

By which we must be saved. Even this year, when you're going to hear from different people. Different teachers. Different preachers. People who say otherwise.

That there's salvation in others than the Lord Jesus. Shut your ears to them. Shut your mind to these words. Because it's only by knowing the Lord Jesus as Savior.

Only by faith in the one true Savior. Only then is salvation possible. Because knowing Jesus as Savior. That gives you true meaning.

True purpose in your life. It gives you that true reassurance. That Jesus paid the penalty for sins that you and I deserve. But of course, there's that knowing.

[7 : 12] That saving grace. And that saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus. But there has to be that ongoing need. That ongoing knowing of Jesus.

That continuing to know Jesus. That really should challenge each and every person who professes the name of Jesus. That's what Paul's saying here in the passage.

That's what Paul's saying here in the passage. I mean, in verse 8, Paul speaks about the difference that the Lord Jesus Christ has made in his life. But then in verse 10, he repeats that. He repeats that theme about knowing Jesus.

Knowing Christ as Lord. And so, as we begin this new year. What better time than to resolve the more.

To know Jesus. To know Jesus as Lord and Savior. But then what's involved in that knowing more of Christ?

[8 : 07] Well, let me suggest four things to touch your hearts with this morning and take with you into the new year. Four things. Relationship.

Righteousness. Resurrection power. And then finally, suffering. Think of relationship. As you know, in life, in everyday life, relationships so often are the bedrock of society.

The bedrock of life itself. So many areas. So many aspects of life. You can have a working relationship with colleagues for the good of the business. The good of the particular workplace where you work.

Then there are relationships that friends form. Mutual interests. Mutual enjoyment of each other's company. Of course, there are family relationships on so many levels.

It's parent to child. Child to parent. All the various blood relationships that form within a family. I remember the very first time that I went up to Lewis in 1980.

[9 : 16] I was struck by how much the sense of family relationship played such an important part in island life. First cousins. Second cousins. You know, who knew each other well.

That formed that fabric of society there. Of course, how can we forget marriage relationships? The relationship based on love.

So, you know, when you think of relationships in the human sphere, we think of love. We think of commitment. We think of well-being. We think of relationships that are formed, that are nurtured, that are developed, that are enjoyed.

Relationships that are personal. Person to person. One to one. So, how much more than the relationship of Christ Jesus to the believer and the believer to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul certainly knew that relationship with his Savior. He knew Jesus. Jesus who first loved Paul. And so, Paul could write about his relationship with Jesus that, as he says, far surpassed anything else in his life.

[10 : 28] That's what he writes in verse 8 of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. Because for Paul, as for all of God's people, surely the relationship that you have with the Lord Jesus, it's the greatest treasure of all.

And that revealed the relationship that Paul had with the Lord Jesus. That relationship of love. That relationship of commitment.

Jesus' commitment to Paul and Paul's commitment to the Lord Jesus. His relationship that he speaks of in relation to Jesus as my Lord.

My Lord. You know, when you think of what Paul says of Jesus, my Lord. That's what we might say, what we might call the ultra-personal expression of relationship.

It transcends every other relationship. Jesus' relationship with you. Your relationship with him. That's the relationship to form in life.

[11 : 28] We're going to continue to form relationships, as we said, on different levels. But surely the most important relationship to form this year, in all years that God gives you, is the relationship with the Lord Jesus.

That's the most important relationship of all. But is Jesus your Lord? Is he your Lord in the sense of his rule over you, reign over your life, over every aspect of your life?

Is it your heart's desire that he rules in every area of what which is your life? Or do you keep certain things away from his Lordship?

Or certain things you don't want Jesus to have Lordship over in your life? Or do you call him my Lord with that full intention that he rules over every aspect of your life?

Well, Paul did. What about you, each one of you, as you head into this new year? Is Jesus your Lord in all things? Do you remember what Jesus once said?

[12 : 40] Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. But the one who does the will of my Father, who's in heaven. I pray that this year is going to bring you to re-evaluate your relationship with the Lord Jesus.

That he truly will be your Lord in 2022. Over 50 years ago, George Harrison, the former Beatle, George Harrison once sang, My Sweet Lord.

He really wanted to know the one he referred to as Lord. His Lord wasn't Jesus. He had no relationship. Certainly when he wrote that song, he had no relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. His relationship was with the Hindu God, Krishna. He might have said, Lord, Lord. But without a saving relationship with Jesus. He and anyone else who won't have Jesus as Lord.

It's lost. I pray there's no one even in this congregation of Livingston who this year faces a lost eternity because he doesn't, because she doesn't know Jesus as Lord.

[13 : 53] You who have that secure relationship with the Lord Jesus, you know that that relationship can never be broken. Because it's that relationship speaks of Christ's righteousness.

That's what Paul was on to mention here in the passage. Because knowing Jesus includes knowing that righteousness that comes from the work of Jesus.

And Jesus' death on the cross for you. You know, Paul could write here of the knowledge of Jesus that, well, that he focused on in relation to his secure relationship with his Lord.

Because he writes in verse 9 of us being found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law. But that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

I mean, this is the most wonderful theology. But it's theology with that great practical application to give you that reassurance, that assurance and reassurance. You who have faith in the Lord Jesus, that you are safe, safe eternally.

[15 : 02] Because that saving knowledge of Jesus involves knowing Jesus has done for you. Because at one time you were outside.

I was outside of Christ. You were lost. But now alongside Paul you're found. Found in Christ. And you know, alongside Paul, at one time you thought your own self-righteousness was good enough for heaven.

And you know now that that righteousness was as filthy rags. There was no righteousness at all. In fact, it was just a delusion. Now you know that you're covered with the righteousness of Christ. Jesus was made sin for you when he died on the cross for you. He credited you with his righteousness. And the most amazing truth in words that, you know, when they're uttered seems so incredible but utterly true.

That you're in Christ. You are now regarded by God as righteous as Christ. Righteous through Christ's righteousness.

[16:11] Your faith in him. So in all your service for the Lord this year, do it with that thankful heart, knowing that you're not condemned. That you're clothed with Christ's righteousness.

That you're safe for all eternity. And you know Jesus as Lord. You know that you're his forever. Spoken of relationships.

We've spoken of righteousness. But then there's that resurrection power in knowing Jesus. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, wrote Paul. You know, not for Paul.

He knows Lord Jesus. He knows Jesus as Lord. But not for Paul just sitting back on that knowledge. Not for him, you know, relaxing of his mind and his will for further service.

No, he wants to know Christ more. He knows that his conversion is ongoing. He knows that he has to keep on in that relationship with Jesus.

[17:16] He's got to strive. He knows he's got to strive each day growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because that's what truly mattered to Paul. He wants to continue to know Jesus.

He wants to continue to have that ongoing relationship with his Savior. He doesn't just want to keep on knowing Jesus. He doesn't want just to keep maturing in his relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Paul tells us he wants to know the power of Christ's resurrection. In other words, he wants to know the God who raised Jesus from the dead. He wants to know God more and more.

He wants to know that power of God in his life. So that Paul is going to be bold in proclaiming the Lord Jesus, proclaiming the gospel. He wants to know that resurrection power to take a stand for truth in a hostile environment that would have nothing to do with the Lord Jesus.

And, you know, as this new year begins, you seek to know that power of the resurrection of Jesus in your life. God won't withhold that power to enable you to do the work that God has given you to do.

[18:30] Because this year there is going to be work for your Lord and Savior. There's going to be work that's going to involve an ongoing prayerful commitment to God.

There's going to be work that's going to need wisdom. Wisdom to discern God's will. You're going to need direction in your life. How you're going to honor God where God places and sends you.

To pray for the power of the resurrection of Jesus in your life and in the life of the church. God wants to give you that power so that you are more like Christ.

You know, being like Christ. That's no smooth path to glory. Because finally, as we're told, we'll be suffering. So Paul said and wanted to know Christ more.

He knew it would involve suffering. But I may know him and the power of his resurrection. And may share in his sufferings. Coming like him in his death.

[19:35] The Savior experienced the wilderness. So will you. The Savior faced the hostility of man. So must you.

The Savior faced rejection. So must you. Now, of course, no one's going to suffer as Christ did in bearing the sins of many. No one, none of us can do that.

Only the Lord Jesus suffered in that particular way. But, you know, as Paul writes in his desire to know more of the Lord Jesus, be more like him. So if you're going to witness, even this year that's begun, 2022, you're going to suffer.

You're going to suffer in the name of the Lord Jesus. Yes, it's going to be suffering. It's not defeat. The prospect of glory that Paul recognized here means that, yes, there is going to be suffering in that prospect.

Notice what Paul speaks of in the resurrection of the dead. Paul looks to the future. Because Paul knows that, having done all the work that God will give him to do, even through that suffering and doing that work, Paul knows what appears that prospect of resurrection.

