

Press on to know the Lord

An exposition of Philippians Chapter 3.

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In Philippians Chapter 3 Paul strongly encourages us to press on to know the Lord. We are not to put our trust in our own strength or stand still in our Christian lives. Rather we are to be continually growing in our knowledge of Jesus, fully trusting in Him.

Paul starts the chapter by explaining that he could have been one who put his confidence in himself. After all he was a leading teacher of the Law before he came to Jesus. He was circumcised, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew, a Pharisee and “faultless” in legalistic righteousness, even to the point of persecuting the Church. But everything that he counted important became nothing when he met Jesus. *I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.* 3:7.

Now he wants to *gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.* 3:8,9.

Paul then states his purpose for living: *I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.* 3:10,11.

To know Jesus, become like Him, and spend eternity with Him. What a purpose for living!

To do this we need:

1. A realistic estimate of our present position

From one perspective, we are nothing, and can put no confidence in ourselves. Yet, we are also someone important to God with a great purpose to fulfill. And we are being made into someone even greater, in Christ!

We need a balanced view of ourselves; a realistic estimate of our present position. Not too high, or we will get proud, and self-centred; and not too low or we will never believe we can do anything worthwhile.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.
Romans 12:3

Paul had this kind of balance. He had many *reasons to put confidence in the flesh*: his many experiences, qualifications and accomplishments. (verses 4-6) but he *considered everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus.* v7 All of his human qualities were *as rubbish* compared to the wonder of gaining Christ and *being found in Him not with a righteousness of his own that comes by law, but that which is through faith in Christ.* This kind of righteousness only comes *from God and is by faith.* (verses 7-9).

2. To know where are we going

Paul was very clear about his goal. He wanted to *know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow to attain to the resurrection of the dead.* (verse 10).

So our ultimate goal as Christians is to **know Christ**: intimately and personally. The way we do this is go through what He went through: the fellowship of His sufferings. (See James 1:2-12). As we get to know Him better we become more like Him (see 2 Corinthians 3:17,18; Ephesians 5:26,27) and we know more and more of His power in our lives. This is a gradual, life-long process of becoming **more and more like Jesus** in every way: of seeing His righteousness worked out in all parts of our lives.

All of this prepares for the great resurrection day when God's church will be caught away and invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' " And he added, "These are the true words of God." Revelation 19:7-9.

Then we will know Jesus fully! The loss of worldly things is nothing compared to all that we will gain in the future. *I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.* v7. Knowing Jesus, becoming like Him and spending eternity with Him is far more valuable than anything we could gain in this world.

3. To have a right attitude

Paul recognizes that he has *not already attained all this* or has *already been made perfect.* 3:12. His approach is to **press on**.

- *Press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.* 3:12.
- *Forgetting what is behind, and straining to what is ahead I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.* 3:13,14.

If we are mature Christians we will have a similar attitude. Recognise that we have not yet made it and press on towards perfection, maturity, completeness in Christ. (*Press on* means to apprehend, take hold of, appropriate, make your own). We must live up to what we have already attained as Paul did. (Some in the Philippians church were living as enemies of the cross of Christ focusing on food and other earthly things. *Their destiny is destruction.*v19).

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies, so that they will be like His glorious body. 3:20,21. Jesus has called us to be his Bride so let us press on to become that bride. This is called a prize: *the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.* 3:14.

This is a very high calling and we know that *many are called but few are chosen.* Matthew 22:14. We can only marvel "Why me?" and then, press on until we are made into the very likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ and become His Bride.

This is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends. 4:1.

My declaration.

I recognise that God has already done wonderful things in my life and that I am not the person that I used to be. I know that I am becoming more and more like Jesus slowly and steadily as the Holy Spirit works in my life. I choose to press on to know still more of Jesus and become more and more like Him. I willingly forsake the things of this world because I know that relationship with Jesus is far better than anything this world can ever offer. I look forward to the day when this process will be finished and I stand before Jesus complete in every way. I will be part of the Bride of Christ and will live with Jesus forever, giving Him the honour that He is due for ever and ever. Amen.

