

## Message #18

## Philippians 3:10-11

We begin this morning by asking you a question. Do you know any of the following people? Do you know Jim Harbaugh, Chuck Swindoll, Clint Eastwood, Phil Mickelson, Tiger Woods or Billy Graham? Do you know any of them?

Now of course one who is wise will ask: “What do you mean by “know”? I am certain that most of us could say we know them in one sense of being able to recognize them, but we do not know them in the sense of having personal intimate knowledge of them. Our life experiences don’t include them.

Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost was once visiting Victoria, British Columbia, and a certain businessman asked him if he knew a certain man in Dallas, who was widely known. Dr. Pentecost said, “Yes, I know him, but I don’t know him.” What he meant was I know who he is, but I have never spent personal time with him so I really don’t know him.

It is very possible, in fact, very probable that many people who claim they are Christians know Jesus Christ about as well as they know Michael Jordan. They know who Christ is, but they really don’t know Him because they have never really developed an intimate relationship with Him.

A key word of these verses is that word “know.” This is a word that means to know in the sense of personally understanding and experiencing something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 92). It is much more than just some mental knowledge of information or facts; it is a word that suggests very intimate knowledge. In fact, this very word was used in regard to Joseph and Mary not having any sexual intimacy prior to the birth of Jesus (Matt. 1:25; Luke 1:34).

Now the Lord wants to have a personal relationship with every one of His children. He wants them to know Him in a very personal and intimate way. But sadly, for many believers that has not happened. Some have the idea that I invited Jesus Christ into my heart in the same way I invite Clint Eastwood into my home. I know who He is, but I really don’t know Him personally and I really don’t know Him intimately. I don’t know what He likes or doesn’t like. I really don’t know Him much at all.

For any believer facing Jesus Christ, that will be tragic. To stand before Him, to recognize Him but to never have intimately known Him, will be tragic. It will be a sad day if that happens. **The Apostle Paul did not want that happening to him or to these Philippians.**

**Paul’s great passion in life was to know Jesus Christ! He not only wanted to know about Christ, he actually wanted to know Him personally.** He wanted to walk through life with a very personal and intimate relationship with the Lord. He did not want to get before the Lord and end up ashamed. He wanted to win the eternal prizes of God. He wanted that for himself; he wanted that for the Philippians and God wants that for us.

Our goal in life is not to know religious rules, rituals and religious traditions. Our goal in life is not to know legal codes or denominational laws. Our goal is to know Jesus Christ.

These are two seemingly simple verses; but these verses are profound. What Paul says is this:

**THE BELIEVER WHO WILL WIN THE PRIZES IS ONE WHO WILL PASSIONATELY PURSUE AN INTIMATE AND FOCUSED RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST THAT SEEKS TO KNOW HIM AND STRIVES TO BE LIKE HIM.**

We who know the Lord have a great calling and that is to know Jesus Christ and be conformed to Him so that we win on the day we see Him. Those who make this pursuit their personal pursuit will one day win and those who don't will lose. It is that simple.

Now from the context in which these two verses sit, we may observe three important Biblical steps in the process of righteousness that truly does know Jesus Christ:

**(Step #1)** - The process begins with justification. **3:9** Not our righteousness but His

**(Step #2)** - The process develops by sanctification. **3:10** A mind focused on developing

**(Step #3)** - The process ends in glorification. **3:11** One day we will be with the Lord.

Now Paul loved this church. This was a good church; the best of all the Pauline churches. **But Paul was never satisfied with where he was spiritually, nor did he want the church to be satisfied with where they were spiritually.** He was always after a deeper relationship with the Lord.

We should never be satisfied with where we are spiritually. There is always more to learn and more we can do. We should be growing and developing until we are out of this world.

Now in these two verses there were three Christological objectives Paul had:

**CHRISTOLOGICAL OBJECTIVE #1** – Paul wanted to know Jesus Christ. **3:10a**

When Jesus Christ was here, He prayed a prayer that had us in mind. His prayer was that we would know God and know Jesus Christ (John 17:3). The verb that Jesus used in John 17 and the verb Paul uses in Philippians 3:10 is the same verb. It is the word *ginosko* (γινώσκω). This particular word stresses knowing by an intimate experience that perceives and understands with our minds (*Ibid.*, p. 92). This is not some surface level knowledge. This is the kind of knowledge that actually thinks like and acts like Jesus Christ in conformity to the Word of God at all times and in every situation. That is what Paul was after.

Paul wanted to understand everything he could about Jesus Christ. He wanted to experience Him in a very intimate and personal way. This was not only referring to knowing facts about Jesus Christ, although that is part of it, but this is a passion to actually know Him.

Now from this objective and from this context, we make three observations:

**Observation #1** - It is possible to know Jesus Christ in an intimate and personal way.

This is one staggering thought. It is possible to have such an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ that we not only know Him as our Savior, but as our best friend. It is possible to have such a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that we know what brings joy to Him and what will hurt Him.

It is possible to have such a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that we actually think like Him about things and act like Him in various situations. It is possible to be so consumed with the Lord that He is the first thought on our minds in the morning; the continual thought of our minds throughout the day and the last thought on our minds in the evening. In fact, it is possible to so know the Lord that He is the main part of our dreams at night.

That is what Paul was after in his life and it can be the same way for us. To know how Christ would actually think, we will have to carefully understand God's Word.

**Observation #2** - It is not possible to know Jesus Christ in an intimate and personal way without counting all other things loss. **3:7-8**

It is not possible to know Jesus Christ at this level if we continue to cling to some religious heritage or works. We must count all of that as dung or loss if we want to know Jesus Christ.

There are some who cling to their denomination or rules or rituals more than Jesus Christ. There are many people who would rather know what the denomination thinks more than what Jesus Christ thinks.

Jesus Christ should be the number one focus of our lives and anything else must be secondary to that if we really want to know Him.

**Observation #3** - It is possible not to know Jesus Christ in an intimate and personal way.

The fact that Paul is writing this to the Philippians indicates that it is possible for a believer to not have an intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is possible to know about Him, but not really know Him.

This objective should force each of us to ask ourselves a question: "What is the greatest priority of my life right now?" For Paul, it was to know Jesus Christ.

**CHRISTOLOGICAL OBJECTIVE #2** – Paul wanted to know Christ's resurrection power.  
**3:10b**

No religion can produce resurrection power in our life. No religious traditions or legal codes will ever produce this. No denomination can produce resurrection power in our life. No religious rituals can produce resurrection power in our lives. Only Jesus Christ can do this.

Here is an amazing concept. Paul wanted to personally know and experience in his life the same dynamic power of God that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. In fact, he so wanted that power in his life that he actually prayed that for himself and for other believers (Eph. 1:16; 19-23).

The Greek word “power” (δυναμιν) is the word from which we get our English word “dynamite.” The word speaks of a dynamic power and might and strength that is way above and beyond normal ability (*Ibid.*, p. 123). Paul wanted this explosive dynamic power in his own life.

Now when Paul thought of this kind of power, he connected it to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That resurrection was the greatest display of God’s dynamic power ever displayed:

- 1) The resurrection of Jesus Christ declared Him to be the Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:32-36).
- 2) The resurrection of Jesus Christ gave Him life from the dead (Eph. 1:20a).
- 3) The resurrection of Jesus Christ exalted Him to the highest position (Eph. 1:20b-23).
- 4) The resurrection of Jesus Christ proved He was God’s only means of justification (Rom. 4:25).

When Paul thought in terms of Christ’s resurrection, he thought of it as being the most lofty and powerful and dynamic thing that had ever happened. **That powerful resurrection of Jesus Christ set Him apart from all the religions of all time.**

When Paul thought about the resurrection in connection to the believer, he thought about it in powerful and dynamic ways:

- 1) It was the resurrection power of God that gave spiritual life to one spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1).
- 2) It was the resurrection of Christ that powerfully proves our justification (Rom. 4:25).
- 3) It was the resurrection of Jesus Christ that gives us our position (Rom. 6:4).
- 4) It is the same resurrection power that gives us power to have victory over sin (Rom. 6:5-6).

Paul wanted the same power that would set him apart from all the religious things in the world. He wanted a display of that power that was way above and beyond everything and everyone.

What Paul is saying is that I want to know that power personally in my life. I want to display that same resurrection power in my life practically. I want to have such a display of that power in my life that people know I know Jesus Christ. He did not ever want to be dominated by the flesh or by sin; he wanted to have a resurrection power that made a statement for the glory of God, like the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### **CHRISTOLOGICAL OBJECTIVE #3 – Paul wanted to know fellowship with Christ’s sufferings. 3:10c-11**

Now there is a sense in which we cannot ever suffer as Jesus Christ did. What we can do is endure things for Christ. We learn in Hebrews 5:8 that Jesus actually “learned obedience” through things He suffered. This does not mean He had ever been disobedient. That is how we learn. **We typically learn obedience through failure.** Christ never failed. He was never disobedient. What He learned is that if you obey the will of God on earth, it often leads to suffering and pain before it leads to great elation and joy.

Paul is writing this letter to produce joy and one of the trails for a believer that leads to joy is the trail of suffering. That is the way it was for Christ and that is the way it is for us.

Paul was not out looking to suffer, but he was not afraid of it. He knew that Jesus Christ had suffered and was highly exalted, so he figured if he were in a close relationship with Christ, he, too, would suffer. Frankly, Paul did suffer quite a bit. When we read that list in II Corinthians 11:23-28, he certainly did not have life easy.

But Paul was so committed to Jesus Christ that he knew negative suffering was something that was part of having a close relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul was so serious about his commitment to Jesus Christ that he was willing to die for Him, which eventually he did.

Now the word “fellowship” is the word that means communion, contribution, communication and companionship. Paul wanted to make a contribution to Jesus Christ and he knew that in order to do that, at times it means he would suffer. Just the travel Paul undertook to reach out to the world for Jesus Christ was not something most would undertake.

Frankly, we don’t suffer much. But if we are faithful, there will be a few hardships along the way.

Paul said I would be willing to die for Christ and if I did, I would also experience a resurrection like Jesus Christ.

**Verse 11** has been misunderstood and actually lofted out of its context. Paul was not “iffy” about the resurrection. He never doubted the resurrection (I Cor. 15; II Cor. 4:14) and he also never doubted his own eternal destiny (Phil. 1:21, 23).

What Paul is saying here is that I want an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and am willing to suffer and even die for Him, but if I do die, I will also eventually be raised like him. In fact, every believer will one day be raised like Christ (I Cor. 15).

For Paul, suffering was not a penalty to be avoided; it was a privilege to be encountered. When we suffer as a faithful believer, there is purpose in it and there is a process to it. Through suffering we learn how to minister to others (II Cor. 1:5). Through suffering we are conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:18, 26-29). Paul had one main goal in life—to know Jesus Christ. This was the meaning of his life. May his goal be our goal.

Here is the big question of these verses. How do you know Jesus Christ? In what way do you know Him? Do you know about Him? Do you know Him?

Back in the 70’s, when I was in radio, there was a song that hit the top 100 hits of Billboard. It was a song based on a hymn that showed up in a hymnal in 1940. The lyrics were these:

“Dear Lord of three things I pray,  
To see thee more clearly,  
to love thee more dearly,  
to follow thee more nearly, Day by Day.”