

20240825 Knowing Christ – Ps Bijoy

Philippians 3:3-11

“For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, 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 is through faith in^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.”

What does it mean to know Jesus? Not just know *about* him but *know him*, right now, know the living Christ on the throne of heaven. Do you know him?

One thing to make clear about Paul’s expressed desire “to know him” is that Paul is pressing way beyond minimal saving knowledge to maximal satisfying knowing. He’s not asking, What’s the least I need to know to be saved? Rather, he’s talking maximally knowing and enjoying a real, living, breathing person, who has made himself knowable both as God, and as man. This is maximal personal-knowing, not minimal information-knowing.

Now, in some ways, those of you who believe in Jesus have experienced the same process that married couples have gone through. Through some sorts of circumstances, you heard about Jesus. Someone probably told you about him, perhaps your parents or a friend. And then, you began to know more about Jesus. Then, you read the Bible. You read some sort of book about Jesus. You watched some sort of movie about Him. And then, over a period of time, you came

to trust His message. You repented of your sin. And you believed in Jesus. And over the years, you have come to know more and more of Jesus. The deeper you pursue your knowledge of Jesus, the better will be your walk with the Lord.

He says, before he even makes it out of the first several sentences, that “for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21). In other words, despite Paul’s terrible suffering, he’s concerned first and foremost to say to the Philippians that either in life or in death, what matters most to Paul—what is ultimately worth whatever happens to him—is his intimate, relational knowledge of Jesus. See, as long as Paul breathes on this earth, he’s saying, “For me to live is Christ...” The direction of his life is always Godward. In every aspect, Paul is trying to draw deeply from the well of Christ and allow God’s love for him to trickle down into his interactions with others, and he encourages the Philippians to find their source of life in the same place (2:5).

Paul undoubtedly considered the person of Jesus to be much more glorious even than the life he spent so many years building. Paul says, “I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh” (3:4). He was circumcised on the eighth day, an Israelite from Benjamin’s tribe, a Pharisee, a persecutor of the church, and blameless under the law (3:5-6). Paul is daring someone to say that they have more good works to their name than he does.

So, what of these good works? What do they do for someone like Paul? Absolutely nothing. Paul says, “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” (3:7-8). Even when considering his own life—decades worth of accomplishments and untold hours worth of work—he can’t trade his own false “righteousness” for Christ’s true righteousness quickly enough. He’s so captivated by the person of Jesus that no decision has ever been easier.

If Jesus has brought you into a relationship with himself, then your biggest problem—sin—is solved and your deepest thirst for a relationship with the God who created you is quenched. It might still hurt if you don’t get into that college or get that new job, but those things don’t make you any more or less accepted before God. If you know that God is pleased with you

whether you go to Australia or Christchurch, you're free to receive his love instead of proving yourself worthy of it.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul shows us an incredible vision of the Lord Jesus. He forces us to see him so clearly and magnificently that there's no option but to grow in love for Christ, and the more we grow in our knowledge and love of Jesus, the more we'll be conformed to His image.

John Piper said, "The heart is a desire factory." What do you desire today? What's your heart cranking out? What are you looking forward to? What's your treasure? That's worth thinking about, isn't it? The apostle Paul wouldn't have hesitated, "Jesus is my treasure, I want to know Christ." And Thomas Chalmers called this "the expulsive power of a new affection." See, our affections for things that aren't Jesus—whether those things are sinful, or good things which simply hold an ultimate place in our hearts—can only be evicted by a deeper affection for something better: Jesus.

So, what is Paul teaching to parents (Christians at large) in his letter to the Philippians? He teaches us that we must give our kids Jesus. We must show him to them in all of his glory and beauty. He is more glorious than that college acceptance letter or that scholarship offer. In fact, he shows us as that Jesus is more glorious than our personal or ministry success. He makes it vividly and wonderfully clear to all Christians that whatever it is in our lives that we're worshiping, Jesus is better.

J.I packer says in his book 'knowing God'

"What were we made for? To know God. What aim should we set ourselves in life? To know God. What is the "eternal life" that Jesus gives? Knowledge of God. "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" ([John 17:3](#)). What is the best thing in life, bringing more joy, delight, and contentment, than anything else? Knowledge of God. "Thus says the Lord, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me'" ([Jer. 9:23f](#)). What, of all the states God ever sees man in, gives Him most pleasure? Knowledge of Himself. "I desire ... the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings" ([Hosea 6:6](#)).