

# THE EXCELLENCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

## (Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Morning – 9<sup>th</sup> October 2022

**Reading: Philippians 3:1-11. (Philippians 3:8)**

Paul knew a lot about a lot before he was converted. But when he was converted he realised that knew nothing of eternal value. In fact, he discovered that knowing a particular someone was everything and led to total satisfaction and a sense of being complete.

### **1. A historical Person you can know now.**

It is not possible or right to have an ongoing relationship with a dead person. We can remember them and think about them, but they are not there for us to relate to in a living way. We can see paintings of historical figures or visit their statues. We can read their writings, but we cannot actually relate to them as living people. We can even see life-size waxworks of them, but they are not alive. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a historical figure. Even opponents of the Christian faith conceded that He existed. Because He rose again, we can relate to Him and Him to us. Though He is in heaven now, this does not mean that He is far away from us. He is very near to us and comes to us in the Person of the Holy Spirit to indwell us. Our prayers ascend to heaven and do not have to struggle to reach Him. We are not at risk of our message being lost on the way. Neither are we tempted to communicate with Him through a medium or a priest.

Paul knew the Lord. It was not just knowledge he had in an abstract way. It was not a matter of knowing words. It was about actually knowing the Lord. He could have a conversation with Him and interact with Him, and indeed with the different Persons of the Trinity.

Our nation has a new king, but do we know him personally? Does he know us? Does he personally help us and share things with us? We can know our Lord and converse with Him without this having to be a weird experience, requiring us to speak in tongues, or something like that. It is a matter of us being alert and rational in our thinking. It is an experience in which we need to be awake. We can be personally aware that He lives, that He cares for us, that we belong to Him and connect with Him.

## **2. All rubbish.**

Knowing Christ has an excellence, a surpassing worth. It is incalculable and immeasurable. There is so much we have in knowing Him that, by comparison, everything else is rubbish. It is like offal. Paul thought, once upon a time, that he had excellence of knowledge. He thought that he knew God and that he was accepted. He thought he was the right man, doing the right things. This is what he rehearses in vv4-6. He thought people were envious of him. He thought God was pleased with him and, in truth, he was pleased with himself.

As he looks back, he knows that this 'knowledge' deceived him and was killing him. It was pride feeling good about himself. That sort of knowledge had puffed him up.

People might pride themselves on 'following the science', believing themselves to have superior knowledge to everybody else. People might follow philosophy and think that their system gives them clear thinking and puts them in a better place than their fellow man. Others are worldly-wise and think they know better when they call the Christian faith 'rubbish'. Any one of us can be valuing rubbish without realizing it. We can be impressed with false knowledge and be indulging in ignorance simply because it has long words. We can be over-awed by oratory and be impressed by people who appear to be quick thinkers and able to do clever 'put downs'. We can feel intellectually superior and yet never realize that there was another way of thinking that we had totally missed.

## **3. The excellence of knowing Christ.**

Compared to knowing Christ, everything else is worthless. It does not add much of value to us. It does not fulfill us. It does not enhance us. Instead, we can be brought into a relationship with Him where He considers us righteous in His sight. It means we enjoy His favour, not as a result of our long-service, status or self-deprivation. It is a gift we receive by faith (v9). Christ's blood and righteousness answers out guilt.

We know that our search for God's favour has ended when we put our trust in Him and receive His righteousness, rather than seek one of our own doing. We look to Him and are satisfied. Our fruitless search for peace with Him has come to an end. We discard dead works and sing to Him with a clear conscience. We are able to attend to His truth and connect with Him as a wise, loving and warm Being. We read the Bible as something that has come from Him, that speaks to us about Him. We speak to Him as speaking to someone who has great understanding. Does the world have someone with such sympathy and love that it can turn to? And it is not cheap 'unconditional love' that He gives but love that helps us change and grow up. His wisdom enriches us. We are more self-controlled and are able to examine ourselves more accurately. We have an internal

surveillance system to keep a check on our pride. We are stimulated and learn from Him. No school or university can provide what He supplies.

There is always more to know and enjoy. He keeps supplying. To those who have much, even more is given. It is all supernatural with answers to our prayers. He can nudge the natural world to make things happen for His people. He can nudge non-Christian people to make things happen for His people. All of this is our possession and part of the excellence of the knowledge of Him.