

Knowing Christ

Text: Phil. 3:7-14

Introduction:

1. A new section of the Epistle opens before us in chapter 3. Much of it is autobiographical where the Apostle uses his own testimony as a part of the argument against the Judaizers and their false message of works salvation. This is one of several passages where Paul recounted his conversion from Judaism to Jesus.
2. Our outline for the messages from this chapter is as follows:
 - I. Paul's Admonition (Vs. 1-6)
 - II. Paul's Ambition (Vs. 7-11)
 - III. Paul's Attitude (Vs. 12-13a)
 - IV. Paul's Aim (Vs. 13b-14)
 - V. Paul's Appeal (Vs. 15-21)
3. "In the first part of this chapter (3:1-6), Paul contrasted himself with the legalistic Judaizers, but in this middle section he reveals his new relationship to Jesus Christ. Two aspects of his salvation are given here; justification (3:7-9) and sanctification (3:10-14)." (Gromacki)
4. In our last message we considered Paul's Admonition where he warned the Philippian church of the threat of false teachers and then proceeded to discuss his own experience of works-based religion. He now continues to discuss his testimony and how he came to know Christ in salvation and then went on to know Christ more and more in his Christian life.

Look at...

I. Paul's Ambition (Vs. 7-11)

A. To Know Christ in Salvation (In the past) (Vs. 7-9)

For Paul, this involved two key steps:

1. The Rejection of Self-righteousness (Vs. 7-8)
 - a. What Paul lost. "When Paul met Christ, a wonderful exchange took place. Paul lost some things, but he gained much more than he lost." (Wiersbe)
 - i. "what things" = the 'things' described in the previous verses (Vs. 4-6); his list of seven religious achievements. Paul's previous religious pride involved pride of ancestry and pride of religiosity. If you had lined up a the most religious people of the day, Paul would have stood head and shoulders above everyone else at the head of the line.
 - ii. "I counted loss for Christ" = the word 'counted' means "to think, esteem". Paul came to a change of perspective on his religious achievements.
 - iii. "I count **all** things but loss" = goes even beyond his religious achievements. Nothing was more important to Paul than knowing Christ.

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- iv. “for whom I have suffered the loss of **all** things”
- v. “count them but dung” = Paul came to consider his own religious achievements as useless as excrement/refuse.
- vi. “Paul’s assets became liabilities; his credits suddenly were transferred into the debts column” (Gromacki).

b. What Paul Gained

What did Paul receive in exchange for what he lost?

- i. “for Christ” (Vs. 7).
- ii. “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Vs. 8). This is a reference to knowing Christ in salvation. It involves knowing the facts of the Gospel but it is more than that. It involves knowing Christ personally.
- iii. “that I may win Christ” (Vs. 8). based on the same root word translated ‘gain’ in Vs. 7. Paul lost in order that he might gain! He lost his reputation but gained salvation; he lost his legalism but gained the Lord; he lost religion but received redemption; he lost his self-righteousness but gained Christ’s perfect righteousness; he lost a system but gained a Person.
- vii. “To have everything without Christ is to have nothing, but to have Christ is to possess everything.” (Gromacki)

2. Reception of Divine righteousness (Vs. 9)

- a. “be found in him” = in Christ! “The passive voice of this verb shows that a believing sinner has been put into Christ by God.” (Gromacki)
- b. “not having mine own righteousness” = the self-righteousness described in Vs. 4-6. Righteousness had been Paul’s objective as a zealous Pharisee but he came to realize that righteousness was not something he could achieve. “Paul looked at his own record and discovered that he was spiritually bankrupt” (Wiersbe).
- c. “through the faith of Christ...by faith” = the channel through which the Divine righteousness is received.
- d. “righteousness which is of God” = God’s righteousness credited/imputed to the repentant, believing sinner. God is the source of this righteousness. See Rom. 1:16-17; 3:10, 19-28; 4:1-5; 10:9-10.

B. To Know Christ in Sanctification (In the present) (Vs. 10-11)

Paul’s salvation marked not the end for him but the beginning.

1. Knowing His Person (Vs. 10a)

- a. ‘know’ = an experiential knowledge. Some know facts about an individual whereas others know someone intimately.
- b. ‘him’ = Christ.
- c. “Getting saved is like getting married, it is just the beginning of a growing, knowing, sharing relationship.” (Gromacki)

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2. Knowing His Power (Vs. 10b)
 - a. 'power' = supernatural power.
 - b. 'resurrection' = the same power that raised Christ from the dead.
 - c. See Ephesians 1:15-23 for a description of this resurrection power.
3. Knowing His Presence (Vs. 10c)
 - a. 'fellowship' = communion, joint participation
 - b. "his sufferings" = not his sufferings for sin. We can never participate in that! But we can suffer for Christ's sake. Col. 1:24 "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:"
4. Knowing His Principle (Vs. 10d)
 - a. "being made conformable" – present tense; passive voice. A daily, ongoing work wrought in us by the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Identification with Christ's death a key theme for Christian living in the New Testament.
 - c. Paul could testify, "I die daily" (1. Cor. 15:31). Christ requires His disciples to take up the cross daily (Luke 9:23)
 - d. See Rom. 6:6 & Gal. 2:20. We are crucified with Christ!

Look at...

II. Paul's Attitude (Vs. 12-13a)

Paul's attitude is full of humility as he acknowledges:

A. He Hadn't Acquired Everything (Vs. 12a)

1. "already attained" = word means 'received'.
2. Paul hadn't received everything that God had in store for Him yet, including the resurrection (Vs. 11).

B. He Hadn't Arrived at Everything (Vs. 12b)

1. "already perfect" = 'perfect' means complete, spiritually mature
2. Paul is saying he still has more room for growth, even though by now he is a mature saint and a seasoned Apostle!
3. "Paul states that he has not come to the place in the Christian life where growth in spiritual maturity has been completed, beyond which there is no room for further development." (Wuest)

C. He Hadn't Apprehended Everything (Vs. 12c-13a)

1. 'apprehend' = to lay hold of, seize upon so as to make one's own. It comes from the Greek word 'katalambano' which is made up of 'kata' (intensive) and 'lambano' (to take hold of intently). It is translated 'take' (i.e., the woman "taken in adultery" Jn. 8:3).
2. "but I follow after that I may apprehend" = Paul wanted to lay hold of, grasp after and seize the purpose for which God had gotten a

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hold of him. The phrase “follow after” is in the present tense, indicating continuous action.

3. “that for which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” = Christ had got a hold of Paul’s life and saved him with a purpose in view for His life. He was Christ’s “**chosen vessel**...to bear my (Christ’s) name before Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15) In Galatians 1:15-16, Paul stated, “...it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, **To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen...**”
4. “I count not myself to have apprehended” (13a) = ‘count’ means to reason, calculate, or think. Reveals Paul’s mindset. He didn’t have the mindset that he had apprehended (laid hold of) all that God had for him as a part of His Divine will for Paul’s life. Paul knew that he hadn’t “arrived” in the Christian life despite all God had enabled him to accomplish in the work of God to date. “This is the statement of a great Christian who never permitted himself to be satisfied with his spiritual attainments. A **sanctified dissatisfaction** is the first essential to progress in the Christian race.” (Wiersbe)

Look at...

III. Paul’s Aim (Vs. 13b-14)

A. Forgetting the Past (Vs. 13b)

1. “one thing I do” = single-minded pursuit. “No athlete succeeds by doing everything; he succeeds by specializing.” (Wiersbe) The “one thing” mindset is vital to the Christian life (See Psalm 27:4; Lk. 10:42).
2. “forgetting those things which are behind” = the word ‘forgetting’ is in the present tense. This was a constant choice that Paul made. It would include his past life before salvation as outlined in Vs. 4-6. This did not mean that Paul could erase these things from his mind. This is clear from the fact he just recounted them in detail! But with God’s grace, he didn’t have to allow the past to hinder his progress for the Lord. Too many Christians are trying to run the race by looking backward.
3. Someone once said, “Today is the first day of the rest of your life.”
4. “Paul uses an illustration here of a Greek runner completely forgetting his opponents whom he is leading in the race. Just as a runner’s speed is slackened should he think of those behind him, and the thud, thud of their pounding feet, so the Christian’s onward progress is hindered should he dwell on the past full of failures and sins, full of heartaches and discouragements, full of disappointments and thwarted hopes and plans. As long as a Christian has made things right with God and man, he should completely forget the past.” (Wuest)
5. Application: Our forward movement for Christ can be hampered and hindered if we are constantly dwelling on past failures or even past victories. Yesterday’s failures do not have to be today’s or

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tomorrow's failures! And yesterdays victories, which do serve to give us hope and encouragement, are not today's or tomorrow's victories. Some believers live so much in the past, they miss what God has for them in the present and in the future!

B. Focusing on the Future (Vs. 13c-14)

1. "follow after" (Vs. 12) = picture of a hunter. Means to pursue.
2. "reaching forth...I press towards" = picture of a runner, straining very muscle towards the finish line. The phrase "reaching forth" means to stretch out towards. The word 'press' comes from the same word translated "follow after" in Vs. 12 and speaks of a vigorous, passionate pursuit. The word 'towards' means to bear down upon. This is a metaphor of a runner leaning forward as he runs (Robertson's Word Pictures).
3. "the mark" = 'skopos'; the goal, the mark at the end of a race.
4. Hebrews 12:1-2 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." We learn some important lessons about the Christian race in this verse:
 - a. We need to be light weight – "lay aside every weight...and the sin" Note the word 'every'. Not some of the weights hindering your race for the Lord but ALL of them!
 - b. We need to be looking – "looking unto Jesus" He is our focus and our goal!
5. "for the prize" = the eternal rewards for faithfully following the will of God.
6. "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" = to live for Christ is the highest and noblest vocation one can ever have in this life.

Conclusion:

1. Have you, like Paul, turned from your own righteousness and received God's righteousness? Are you saved?
2. What are your goals in life as a Christian? Is Christ and Christ's will the all-consuming passion of your life?