

Philippians

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- [0 : 00] We're trusting in the Lord for his promised help and direction.
- I venture to direct you to the words found in the chapter that we read, in the third chapter in the epistle to the Philippians, the first part of the eighth verse.
- Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but last, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.
- The first part of the eighth verse, in the third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians. This chapter is mainly about righteousness and knowledge and example.
- That, of course, is not a complete summary of the very precious teaching and example and experience expressed here, but it does express simply what we have set before us in this part of the word.
- [1 : 28] There is first the matter of righteousness. That means that which is acceptable in the sight of God, who requires absolute perfection in that which is offered unto him.
- righteousness is complete conformity to his own holy law. And as far as righteousness was concerned, the apostle Paul compared very well with others about him.
- He could say that he had more than most of the righteousness, which was according to the outward law and its observance.
- But then he came to the point when he threw it all away. He counted it all but loss or as done, refuse as that which was not in the least a hell, but rather a hindrance.
- We might start to wonder as to what it was that caused him to take such an extreme step. that which was gained to him, he counted loss before Christ because he saw his righteousness as it really was in the sight of God.
- [3 : 21] According to the word in the prophet, that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. all his efforts, all his legal obedience, there was nothing better than that, as a righteousness to stand before God in.
- But his eyes were open to see a much better righteousness, one which was altogether perfect and as spotless.
- As he speaks here, that he was desired to be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law. That was useless and worse, but of that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God, which is of God by faith.
- as he declared it in that passage to the Romans so clearly, but now the righteousness of God, which is without the law, is manifest, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is upon all, which is unto all, and upon all, that's believed.
- He was a perfect righteousness, and absolutely free. He speaks of it later in the Romans as the free gift of righteousness, that which the Lord Jesus had spent his life, and had given his life, and to procure for his people.
- [5 : 17] That was the righteousness that Paul desired, and indeed he was brought to trust entirely in. Dear friends, what a great thing it is to have a righteousness.

We should all need one at last. We shall need a righteousness to stand before God in what will be yours.

For what a wonderful thing we can say, as one did in the hymn, the terrors of law and of God. With me can have nothing to do my Saviour's obedience and blood hide all my transgressions from view.

This righteousness alone will do in that great day. And so, the Apostle Paul desired to know this person who had done so much for him, who had spent his life, and who had laid down his life in such agony that he might have that righteousness are which is of God by faith.

He wanted to know him. He desired the knowledge of this person of Christ Jesus, his Lord.

[7 : 00] And the more he knew of him, the more he longed to know. He was not satisfied with attaining much. There was much more to know about this glorious person.

And so we have it expressed in the text especially that he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord.

God. And here in this seeking and longing for this knowledge, he is an example to us as he himself expresses in all humility that he sets before us in this chapter that he is an example to all the people of God in this matter.

he was certain he was in the right way, that he was perfectly right in this course and in these longings.

He desired that all others of the people of God should be with him in this earnest pursuit before more of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

[8 : 27] and so he says, let us therefore as many as be perfect, that is mature, be thus minded whereunto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing, let us all be in this way.

faith. And again he says, be followers brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk, so as ye have us for an example, for an example.

He knew that in this matter, God had given him that grace and wisdom, that earnest desire and longing, which was an example to others in this matter, and an example, dear friends, to us each.

Are we found in this course? No doubt we love to him to sing such hymns as express this truth, to know by Jesus crucified, by far excels all things besides.

Well, of course, it is absolutely true, and our hearts agree with it. No doubt when we sing, dear friends, do we really follow it out?

[10 : 08] Are we like Paul in his earnest and constant pursuit of this knowledge? I fear that it is often with many of us.

One may speak for others, but alas, although we feel at times and in the house of God, something of this longing and this spirit that the Apostle had, how soon it seems to be dissipated, how soon in the ordinary course of life we seem to forget the priceless knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We fail to seek after it, as the Apostle did. No wonder then if our knowledge is small, if we are about lagging far behind him in this matter.

He is set before us here as an example to every believer. This is how we should be. I count all things but loss before the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

Do you count it so? As we look upon the things, the other things, the all things that attract our attention, do we really count them as nothing in comparison with this knowledge?

[11 : 51] Now we have in the word, the Lord may help me to speak from it, we have first the knowledge that he speaks of and so desires the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and then we have the great excellency of that knowledge, the preeminence of it, and then we have the estimation of it.

The apostle says, I count all things but loss in comparison with that knowledge. knowledge. First then we have the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord.

Again he says later that I may know him, not to know about him, not to know many things concerning him, but to know him, to know himself, because nothing less than this is the true knowledge of Jesus Christ.

What does it consist of? I'm sure that there are two aspects of this vital, this invaluable knowledge of Jesus Christ.

There is first of all this, that it consists revelation of the person of Christ to our minds, apprehension of our minds, revelation and illumination by the spirit of God of our minds.

[13 : 49] It is by revelation as Paul himself plainly declares this was how he had come to some knowledge of Jesus.

He writes to the Ephesians, he speaks to them and says that this way they might understand. He says how he had written them to them before that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery whereby when ye read ye may know, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

It was given him by a divine revelation to his mind, to his understanding. And so also he speaks of it in the Galatians and says plainly that the gospel that he preached he received by revelation.

that when God, he says, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, when it pleased God to reveal his son in me, pleased God to reveal the Lord Jesus to him.

On that road to Damascus and on many subsequent occasions he had a revelation of Jesus Christ to his understanding and how necessary this is, that we should see him because it is written in the prophet of how it was with the Jews and how it would be with them when we shall see him.

[15 : 51] The prophet says there is no beauty in him that we should desire him. The natural understanding and mind sees no beauty in Jesus Christ.

There is no attraction in him. They see nothing in him at all. But how different if our minds are illuminated by the Spirit of God to behold him, then he becomes so needful, so desirable, so precious, so important, so holy, so loving, so compassionate, for what a different person he is to those whose eyes are opened to see his spiritual beauty and glory.

And this is what the apostle desired before the Ephesians themselves when he said how he prayed for them continually that the God, the Father of Glory were to give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

He says the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power.

He knew that they needed the eyes of their understanding to be enlightened, to behold this person. First then we need a spiritual revelation.

[17 : 50] We need the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened so that we might know what is the beauty of Jesus Christ, and how much we need his grace, and his love, and his life.

Then on the other side of the matter, this is not merely a matter of the understanding, but also of the heart.

These things, as the Holy Spirit is pleased to bring them before us, they touch us to the very depth of our being, knowledge of Christ that Paul had and sought after, was something very deep.

It went right to the very centre of him. It touched him as the very kernel of his whole being, so that the truth that he received in his understanding touched his very heart.

And so, we read in the Old Testament times, for those whose hearts the Lord had touched, although we read very little about them, that is surely a very significant expression.

[19 : 25] This is what we so need the Lord to do, to enlighten our understandings, and to touch our hearts, to grant deep impressions of the truth as it is in Jesus upon our hearts.

And for one thing, it's very much as the words of that beautiful verse express it, if once the love of Christ we feel upon our hearts impressed.

The mark of that celestial seal will never be erased. God has put it there, if he impresses that love, the love of Christ upon our hearts, it leaves an indelible mark.

It's God's seal. He has claimed as such a person before his own, and that impression is an impression of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

And so these things, dear friends, go together. There is the revelation of Christ to the understanding and the impression of his truth, the truth concerning him upon our hearts.

[20 : 52] and if we look at it together, it may perhaps be clearer to us what this vital knowledge is. You know the sun, the shining in the heavens, at the same time gives light and heat.

And although these are different, they are really inseparable, and both of vital importance. And so it is with the sun of righteousness, as it is said to him in the promise, unto you that fear my name will the sun of righteousness arise.

With healing in his wings, he will shine upon you, he will shine into your hearts. And so the apostle really joins these things together in that wonderful word to the Corinthians.

He says, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, not merely in our minds.

The truth enters first into the understanding or the mind, but it goes into the heart, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[22 : 25] Though the apostle could say, no, God has done this, he wanted more and more. We may be sure, dear friends, if we have been illuminated in any measure by the Spirit of God, we shall want more and more.

Is that word attractive to you? Do you ask the Lord to shine again into your hearts to give this most blessed knowledge of Jesus Christ?

And so the hymn expresses it in those words, speaking of his own darkness, that it was until the beams of divine light shone into his heart.

And he says, till they inward light impart, glad my eyes, and warm my heart. You see, those things so beautifully go together.

It's not only gladdening our eyes, but warming our hearts. This knowledge is heartwarming. It's the most blessed revelation to our minds, to our understanding.

[23 : 50] It causes us to see such a beauty in Jesus Christ, that our hearts are warm towards him. We see that he is all in all.

And how beautifully it was expressed or conveyed when the Lord Jesus himself walked with those two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

They were at first in such fear and dismay and dejection, but then he walked with them. Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

And there's no doubt that they were greatly instructed. The truth entered their minds. And they saw many things that they had never seen before in the words, on that never-to-be-forgotten wall.

But what did they say about it? They didn't say, well, that was very interesting. They didn't say, didn't we learn a lot of new things?

[25 : 01] they said, did not our hearts burn within us? As he talked with us by the way, and as he opened to us the scriptures, the truth concerning himself, as he opened up the scriptures, entered their minds with light, and entered their hearts with heat.

And that is the knowledge of Jesus Christ, dear friends, that we want. It is that knowledge that Jesus himself promised to those who follow him.

He says, I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not have, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life, the light that brings life with it.

the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Dear friends, do you seek this? Do you covet it? Do you pray for it?

Is this what you come to the house of God for? Isn't it wonderful that Paul, with all the many things, the many matters, that are so concerned him, which he was so active in, he says, one thing I do, this thing above all else, everything else must be subservient to this, and this of course is not a selfish desire, because it's the very heart and soul of religion.

[26 : 44] One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and pressing forward to those things that are before, I press toward the love, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Oh, to know him. Well, then, this knowledge, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, is excellent.

That is, it is that which excels all other knowledge. No other knowledge can be compared with it for value. It is preeminent.

It surpasses all other knowledge that you could ever obtain. Not, of course, that the knowledge of other things is to be despised.

There's a value in its place, but it is so inferior. Knowledge of all terrestrial things, there to my soul, true pleasure brings.

[27 : 50] no peace, but in the Son of God, no joy, no joy but through his pardoning blood.

Why is this knowledge so preeminent? It is the excellency of the knowledge. It excels all other knowledge. Why is it so?

Well, for one thing, it is spiritual knowledge, and therefore it is of a much higher level and character than all the knowledge of things below.

However much we might learn of natural things, this is of an altogether higher nature. It is so much so that the natural man, with all his intelligence, with all his diligence, can never attain to knowledge.

Nor can any of us, merely by studying even the scripture of truth itself, without the Holy Spirit's teaching and revelation, we can never come to this knowledge.

[29 : 05] As we read in the word, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him.

Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually deserved. They are altogether above his fallen nature.

We must have a new nature, there to appreciate them. We must have new eyes, there to see, and new hearts to feel.

That is, we need our minds and hearts renewed by grace. These things are spiritual, this knowledge is of an altogether better and higher quality and nature and character than any lesser knowledge.

And then it is a transforming knowledge. It has this wonderful character and quality of transforming the recipient of it into the likeness of that person whom he begins to know.

[30 : 20] There is a wonderful transforming quality here. As the Apostle speaks of himself and others with him, he says, we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, that is, in the mirror of the word, the glory of the Lord.

As we see him, as we see more of his glory, as a little of that precious light dawns upon our soul, we are changed into the same likeness, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

He knew, how he knew what the transforming effect that this knowledge had had upon him. He had been a proud, persecuting Pharisee, and now he was not less than the greatest of the Apostles.

He so excelled in wisdom, spiritual wisdom and understanding, in humility and love. Oh, how the grace of God had transformed him.

Oh, what an impression the knowledge of Jesus Christ had made upon this man. He was well fitted to talk about it, to speak of it. That how so changed his whole character.

[31 : 52] And so he writes to the Colossians concerning it. He says, put on the new man, put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.

That knowledge has a transforming effect. He has brought more to the likeness of that one who has newly created him.

and then also this knowledge is everlasting. Jesus said in his prayer to the Father, he says, this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Every beam of divine light into our minds has an everlasting impression. There is that transforming effect which shall never be lost entirely.

We may indeed for the time being lose the impression and the memory of these things, but they are still there. What God has done is forever.

[33 : 26] Dear friends, when we come to the end of our days, when we are upon a dying bed, oh, how precious this knowledge will be then.

What will be the knowledge of the things of this world in comparison with it then? Oh, what thousands of deathbeds have solemnly told?

The knowledge of Christ is more precious than gold. It's more precious than anything in this present world, because all these things are perishing.

They must all pass away, but this knowledge will endure, knowledge attained through grace in that this present life will endure.

we know indeed only in past. The Apostle says himself, now we know, I know in past, but then shall I know, even as also I am known, that this knowledge is the beginning.

[34 : 35] It is, there is eternal life in it, and therefore it is so vitally precious. Dear friends, there you lie down at night, without some persuasion, some realisation that you have some knowledge of Christ, through the Spirit's teaching.

How can we, how can we die without this knowledge? What will it be to die void of this vital knowledge?

And having none of that image, that likeness of Jesus Christ. And then of course this knowledge is excellent or excelling because it is of the most precious person.

There is no one like him. There are people in the Church of God whom we love to know.

We have been blessed with the knowledge of others. And how good it is to know those whom the Lord has dealt graciously with.

[35 : 56] But oh, how can this compare with the knowledge of Jesus himself? There is no one to know in comparison with him.

And therefore this knowledge excels. all other knowledge that we could ever seek after. Who in the heavens can be compared with the Lord?

Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? The psalmist says, Whom have I in heaven but thee?

And there is none on earth that I desire beside thee. There is none to be compared with this man. As one says, this man has not his fellow.

He is infinite God. And he took unto himself that human body, that perfect humanity.

[37 : 01] There is no one to be compared with him. Before love, compassion, before purity, before grace, before mercy, there is an infinite fountain of goodness, of holiness, of truth, of power in this glorious person.

Dear friends, do you not see? There is no one like him to be known. There is no one that can for a moment be compared with him.

And therefore, there is no knowledge that for a moment can be compared with this knowledge. Will you not set your heart on this?

Will you not beg the Lord to grant you more and more and more of this most precious knowledge?

As one says, more of thy glory show me hour by hour. More of thy glory, O my God and Lord.

[38 : 16] More of thyself in all thy grace and power. More of thy love and truth in calmer words.

And then this knowledge, this most excellent knowledge, the apostle expresses in his estimation of it.

He says, I count all things but last for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

He counted it so before, and he still counted it so. He just said that what things were gained to me those I counted lost for Christ.

And he never regressed it. He was still making the same assessment. This word of course implies a careful estimation.

[39 : 19] This is no sudden desire or thought of his mind. This is a very careful assessment of the matter.

Accounting, of course, is a matter of accuracy. These matters have to be done very carefully and accurately. It is like the two columns that need to be added up and to be balanced in a ledger.

There are the two sides to the matter. It is as though the apostle has looked at all other knowledge and carefully assessed it in the light of eternity.

And he has looked also of this matter the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And he's come to this very careful and very distinct and very definite verdict.

He counts all things but loss. And this is the right sort of arithmetic. This is the right sort of reckoning. There's no doubt that the apostle was absolutely right in this.

- [40 : 40] And we are absolutely wrong when we come to any other conclusion. This is the right assessment to count all things but loss in comparison and for the knowledge, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.
- It accords with his expression to the Corinthians where he says, I determined, I made this careful judgment.
- I considered the matter very carefully and deliberately and came to this very firm and unshakable conclusion. I determined to know nothing among you to say Jesus Christ and him crucified.
- And then it is a very emphatic expression. he says, yea, or yes, yea, doubtless. There's no doubt about it.
- He comes to this firm persuasion, to this very definite and deliberate and certain conclusion. All doubts concerning it were gone.
- [42 : 04] He says, yea, doubtless. There's no doubt at all in this matter as to what the right, the judgment of it is. Yea, doubtless.
- I count all things, all other things without exception, all other knowledge, all other precious things that cannot be compared with this.
- Yea, doubtless. I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. God's love.
- It's a very definite and certain and sure conclusion. And this he speaks, of course, by the inspiration of the Spirit of God.
- There can be no question that this most important and emphatic declaration is true. It is the right one.
- [43 : 03] It is the one that we should desire and seek to follow. As he says, we follow us together of me.
- And so he comes to this estimation and it is a constant one. He speaks in the present sentence.
- This, I feel, is where we so often fail. There are times, at least, I hope there are when we feel just this way. We feel that nothing matters in comparison with the knowledge of Jesus Christ.
- Those times seem to be comparatively rare. The apostle was always in this frame. Here he was in prison. It was the same when he was preaching the gospel.
- Whether he was in a state of health or a sickness, when he was comparatively well off or when he was in deep poverty.
- [44 : 08] It was all the same. This is in the present tense. He has come to this certain and constant conclusion, I count.
- I always do. This is the way I live. I've made, I've come to this conclusion by the teaching of the Spirit of God because of that knowledge that he's already imparted.
- This is where I am always. He said already in this epistle, to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.
- And here he says, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. This is my way of reckoning.
- This is how I have assessed the matter. And now it is a fixed and certain thing with me. Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss in for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.
- [45 : 23] Here then, dear friends, we have a shining example before us. We may feel to come vastly assured, to be following a long way behind, but are we following at all?

