

The Book of Philippians

Lesson 8: Knowing Christ Above All -- Philippians 3:7-11

There comes a moment in some lives when a single discovery rearranges everything else. A person finds the one thing so valuable that every other treasure suddenly looks small by comparison, and they would trade it all without hesitation to have it. Jesus told a story about a merchant who found one pearl of such worth that he sold everything he owned to buy it. In these verses, Paul tells us that he is that merchant, and the pearl is Christ.

Last week we watched Paul stack up his religious credentials, the most impressive resume in the ancient world. Now he picks up that whole pile and does the unthinkable with it. Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. And then he goes further. He counts everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus his Lord. The word he uses for what he discarded is blunt, the kind of word polite translations soften. He calls it rubbish, refuse, the stuff you throw out.

Why such extravagance? Because Paul has found something he could not earn and would not trade. He wants to be found in Christ, not clothed in a righteousness of his own that came from law-keeping, but wrapped in the righteousness that comes from God and is received through faith. This is the great exchange at the heart of the gospel, our record of failure for Christ's perfect righteousness, our rubbish for his riches.

And Paul's longing does not stop at being declared righteous. He aches to know Christ, to feel the power of his resurrection, even to share his sufferings and be shaped into his likeness, pressing on toward the resurrection of the dead. This is no cold transaction. It is a love affair, a hunger, a man so captured by Jesus that nothing else can compete. As we study, the question is whether knowing Christ has become that valuable to us, or whether we are still clutching our small treasures with both hands.

Group Discussion: Paul counts everything as "loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus" (3:8). What do you think it would take for a person to genuinely value knowing Christ above everything else?

Personal Reflection: Paul says he wants to "know him," not merely know about him (3:10). On an honest scale, is your relationship with Jesus more like knowing a person or knowing facts about a person, and what would deepen it?

Read Philippians 3:7-11

Study Questions

1. Paul says he counts everything as “loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (3:8), even calling his former gains rubbish. What does this teach us about the true value of knowing Christ compared to everything else?
2. What in your life currently competes with Christ for the top place, the thing you would find hardest to count as loss? What would it look like to begin reordering your treasures around him?
3. Paul longs to “be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” (3:9). What is the difference between these two righteousnesses, and why does it matter where ours comes from?
4. Where do you still try to build a righteousness of your own, leaning on your performance to feel right with God? How would resting in the righteousness God gives through faith change the way you live before him?
5. Paul’s consuming desire is “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection” (3:10). What does it mean to know Christ personally and to experience his resurrection power, rather than simply holding correct beliefs about him?
6. Be honest, has your faith become mostly about information, doctrine, and routine, or are you actually growing in knowing Christ himself? Name one way you could pursue knowing him more deeply this week.
7. Paul also longs to “share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (3:10). Why would a believer desire to share in Christ’s sufferings, and how is suffering connected to being conformed to Christ?
8. Where is God using hardship, loss, or suffering to shape you into the likeness of Christ right now? Are you resisting it, or letting it do its work?
9. Paul wants the righteousness “that depends on faith” and presses on “that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead” (3:9, 11). How does this passage teach that we are made right with God through faith in Christ rather than by earning it, while also showing that this is a living, obedient faith that lays hold of Christ and keeps pressing on, not a mere “faith only” that rests passively?
10. Look back over the whole passage. Paul has been so captured by Christ that everything else looks like loss. Name one specific way Jesus is using these verses to form you, to make knowing him your supreme treasure and to deepen your hunger for him.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Matthew 13:44–46, the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price; Romans 3:21–26, the righteousness of God revealed apart from law and received through faith in Jesus; Galatians 2:20, no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, the life I now live

by faith in the Son of God; 2 Corinthians 4:7–12, carrying the death of Jesus so that his life is revealed in us; Jeremiah 9:23–24, boasting only in knowing the Lord.