

Joy in Knowing Christ
Philippians 3:1-11

July 31, 2011

A. Introduction

1. Confidence, Love, Knowledge
2. Paul's Desire: a deepening relationship with Christ

B. Beware False Confidences 3:1-3

1. 'Finally ... rejoice in the Lord' (v 1)
2. Importance of Paul's words
3. Beware! (v 2)
4. Those really in relationship to God (v 3)

C. Paul's Transformation

1. His Former Confidences 3:4-6
 - a. Paul had had reason for false confidences (v 4)
 - b. His special privileges by birth (v 5a)
 - c. His special privileges by effort (vv 5b, 6)^A

d. The Damascus Road^B

2. Christ Makes Rubbish of His Old Confidences 3:7-9

- a. Gain and Loss (v 7)
- b. Paul's value system upset (v 8)
- c. Christ's surpassing value brings new desire (v 9)

D. Faith's New Desire: to Know Christ 3:10-11

1. His resulting purpose (v 10)^C
2. Faith's expectant outlook (v 11)

E. Conclusion

The greatest thing in all my life is knowing You.
The greatest thing in all my life is knowing You.
I want to know You more.
I want to know You more.
The greatest thing in all my life is knowing You.

Mark Pendergrass © 1983 Sparrow Song

^A Acts 5:34, 22:3, 23:6

^B Acts 9:1-6, Galatians 1:13-14

^C 2 Timothy 3:12, Galatians 2:20

A. Introduction

1. Confidence, Love, Knowledge

- a. are all wrapped up in relationships between people
- b. in early 1958 Phil Spector was impressed by a picture of his father's tombstone on which he read the words, 'To have known him was to have loved him,' and adapted them in writing the song 'To Know Him Is to Love Him' which was made popular by The Teddy Bears, a group in which Phil sang^{2}. The first verse goes like this,

To know, know, know him is to love, love, love him
Just to see him smile, makes my life worthwhile
To know, know, know him is to love, love, love him
And I do.

- c. of course, the song is about girl-boy love, actually a hopeful, but one-sided love; a love that the 'him' has no knowledge about, paying no attention to the girl.
- d. then there is that kind of love which is demonstrated when the man says, 'I'd like to know you better; why don't you come up to my place?' and she replies, 'I think I already know you well enough, thank you!'
- e. here there is a certain level of knowledge and flavour of love, but there is no confidence, no faith or trust
- f. for a relationship to thrive and to deepen, confidence, love and knowledge must co-exist

2. but in our text for today

- a. Paul expresses a love for the Lord Jesus Christ
- b. although the word love is not used, love is clearly shown
- c. that is based upon confidence and expressed in the desire for a deepening knowledge of Christ on Paul's part
- d. what Paul desires, should be also the desire of every believer so that their relationship with Jesus Christ may thrive and deepen

3. to this end, therefore, in the matter of faith or trust,
 - a. Paul warns his readers in Philippi about false confidence
 - b. then relates his own transformation by Christ
 - (A) from his former bases of confidence
 - (B) which he now considers to be but rubbish
 - c. and the new desire brought by faith to know Christ.

B. Beware False Confidences. 3:1-3

1. Paul commences this chapter with the word, 'finally'
 - a. but let me warn you that this is a preacher's 'finally'
 - b. when the preacher says it, he may only be half-way through the sermon
 - c. Paul is only about half-way through this letter
 - d. but it is a way of moving from what he has been saying in order to speak about an important subject in two parts
 - (A) the first of which is that of knowing Christ
 - (B) and the second on which we will, Lord willing, speak next week, that of spiritual progress
 - e. but Paul first wants to clear our minds of any false ideas that will get in the way of our knowing Christ
 - f. so get your focus properly directed: 'rejoice in the Lord'
 - g. which is this: that everything a person can want, can need, can desire, can bring joy, peace and fulfilment, is only to be found, and is surely to be found, in the Lord Jesus
2. How important is what Paul is saying?
 - a. well, he says, 'to write the same things again is no trouble to me,' – this is so important that he does not find it irksome, or tedious, or grievous to have to do it; it is something that is more than life to him so he does so gladly; it is important
 - b. it is important, because knowing experimentally, knowing experientially this truth: 'it is a safeguard for you.' It will keep us out of spiritual trouble and spiritual danger
3. we as Christians need to keep our eyes peeled for danger

- a. verse 2: Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision
- b. in his use of these three terms, there is little doubt that Paul is speaking about one danger; one that had already appeared in the churches of Galatia, that of false teachers who preached Judaism
- c. the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ did not appeal to the theology of these Jews
 - (A) their idea was that salvation could come to these dogs of Gentiles only through the gateway of Judaism
 - (B) Gentiles must first be circumcised to enter the Jewish covenant and then obey the OT laws of Moses
- d. these false teachers made salvation depend on man's works – this is a lie that Paul cannot allow to be believed

4. verse 3 describes who really has a covenant relation with God

- a. we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh
- b. our worship is right because it is in spirit and in truth
- c. our glory, boast or confidence is right because it depends not upon our own self – that is the flesh – but upon Christ Jesus and what He accomplished dying on the cross for us
- d. the false teachers are still around and in the church and they teach that salvation depends on Christ Jesus plus
- e. there is no God-given joy to be found in their teaching

5. so Paul gives a personal testimony to help us to see this:

C. Paul's Transformation

- 1. His Former Confidences 3:4-6
 - a. Paul knows that the Judaisers' teaching is wrong
 - (A) because he once lived where they are living
 - (B) he once thought the way they think
 - (C) he once trusted in his Jewishness for his salvation

- (D) so he says, 'although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more.'
 - (E) so listen where his confidence for salvation used to be
 - b. in verse 5 he describes his special privileges – 'circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; ...' – privileges outside himself; God given privileges; surely he was saved!
 - (A) heir to promises to Abraham by circumcision
 - (B) more specifically to those made to the Israel's race
 - (C) of Benjamin a tribe loyal to David's messianic line
 - (D) of Hebrew parents, trained in the Hebrew Scriptures
 - c. to these Paul added his own efforts, '5b as to the Law, a Pharisee: 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.'
 - (A) he was a Pharisee; his father, a Pharisee; Gamaliel his famous teacher, a Pharisee; the strictest Jewish group who sought to observe the Law to its minutest detail
 - (B) he put his training into action tracking down, pursuing and imprisoning Christians, thinking Jesus to be false
 - (C) so no one could in any way bring a charge against him for failing to keep any part of the law he professed
 - d. until one day on the road to Damascus he met the risen Lord Jesus Christ, who addressing him by his Jewish name, asked, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' (Acts 9:4)
2. Christ Makes Rubbish of His Old Confidences. 3:7-9
- a. verse 7: But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.
 - b. the words 'gain' and 'loss' are business terms, and even more specifically terms used in trading and shipping. 'Gain comes from selling goods, while loss is especially that suffered in a storm at sea when those goods are thrown overboard for the sake of saving the ship. Paul in his voyage of life had gain such goods as circumcision, care in observing the ritual and moral precepts of the law, looking to make great gain – eternal life – at the end of the trip. But on the Damascus road he met a fearsome Storm, and all these had to be jettisoned as having no power to save his life.'

- c. in that moment, when he lost his physical sight for a time, he for the first time ever saw Jesus Christ in His beauty, and love for Christ became the ruling passion of his being.
- d. he discarded his old Pharisaic accounting system: and it stayed discarded: his old assets became liabilities
- e. verse 8a: 'More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...'
- f. his old zeal of pursuing the law and persecuting Christians is replaced with a zeal to know Christ Jesus
- g. the next words in verse 8 tell Paul's experience, '... for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ'
- h. the word 'suffered' is a business term as well: a fine levied – all those good works he had once toted up as profit are forfeit; and in his new accounting system, there is only one item of any value – Jesus Christ
- i. "Paul was a citizen of Tarsus. At the time he lived there, only families of wealth and reputation were allowed to retain their Tarsian citizenship. This throws a flood of light upon Paul's early life. He was born into a home of wealth and culture. His family were wealthy Jews living in one of the most progressive of oriental cities. All this Paul left to become a poor itinerant missionary.
- j. "But not only did he forfeit all this when he was saved, but his parents would have nothing to do with a son who had in their estimation dishonoured them by becoming one of those despised Christians. They had reared him in the lap of luxury, had sent him to the Jewish school of theology in Jerusalem to sit at the feet of the great Gamaliel, and had given him an excellent training in Greek culture at the University of Tarsus, a Greek school of learning. But they had now cast him off. He was still forfeiting all that he had held dear, what for? He tells us, 'that I may win Christ.'^{4}."
- k. the surpassing value of knowing Christ means that here and hereafter, when any scrutiny is made of Paul, that he, verse 9, 'and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,'
- l. faith, and the resulting union with Christ (to which Paul devotes much of his letters to the Ephesian and Colossian churches), have replaced his old, legal, self-righteousness.

1. Paul's purpose is, in verse 10, 'that (he) may know Him'
 - a. a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ that will be shown in three distinct ways for all to see
 - b. in 'the power of His resurrection' – I want the dynamism in my life that comes by the risen Christ living in me – shaping my will to be His will; my thoughts, His mind; my actions, goals and motivations, all His.
 - c. next, 'the fellowship (or sharing) of His sufferings' – this has nothing to do with His atoning suffering on the cross: that is uniquely Christ's and Christ's alone. But this is the suffering which promised in 2 Timothy 3:12, 'Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.'
 - d. and finally, 'being conformed to His death' – a conformity most radical – not that Paul be crucified, but to the spirit and temper of the life of Christ: His submission to God the Father in all things – a conformity that takes place even in life and explained in Galatians 2:20, 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.'

2. Faith looks expectantly forward

- a. to the consummation of this knowledge at the resurrection which will transport us into the heavenly kingdom
- b. verse 11: 'in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.'
- c. some interpret this verse as though Paul was humbly doubtful about his being resurrected to glory
- d. but such an interpretation is completely at variance with the context and Paul's repeated confidence in Christ as voiced through the preceding verses and chapters
- e. the Greek is literally 'if how' and any uncertainty present in the verse is not that of whether it will take place, but in what manner and through what intervening events he will be brought to experience it
- f. and knowing Christ gives to him, and to us, a great peace and desire until it takes place

E. Conclusion

1. 'that I may know Him'
 - a. this is the great heart-cry of Paul
 - b. may it be yours and mine today

1. © 2011 by Garth Hutchinson, Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Aurora (Ontario): may be distributed or quoted freely, only let this be done to the glory “of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Except as noted otherwise, quotations are from the New American Standard version, used by permission. Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. Versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan

Volume 11, including Philippians, by Homer A. Kent, Jr

EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, Philippians by H. A. A. Kennedy, Hodder & Stoughton, 1903

Kerux – The sermon and illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick to be found at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

Moule – The Epistle to the Philippians, by H. C. G. Moule, 1873 (and his commentaries on other epistles)

Motyer – Philippians Studies, The Richness of Christ, by J. A. Motyer; Inter-Varsity Press, 1966

Wuest – Philippians in the Greek New Testament by Kenneth S. Wuest, © 1942 Wm B Eerdmans

2. From www.songfacts.com

3. Adapted from an illustration by Dr MacKnight in the Biblical Museum, *in loc.*

4. From Wuest, *in loc.*