

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

To Know Him Philippians 3:8-11

Intro: Ch3 begins with Paul exhorting the Philippian believers to rejoice in the Lord. The joy that Paul is promoting is a supernatural delight in God and His goodness. The implication of this is that the more you come to know about God and the more you experience His goodness in your life, the more joy you will have. Of course, this is not an emotion we can drum up by our own efforts – even the joy we have is a supernatural gift from God, granted to us because He is a good God. In fact, this joy is the birthright of all who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

Now, no sooner does Paul exhort to rejoice in the Lord, he turns around and warns against the false doctrine of the legalist Judaizers who hounded him everywhere he ministered. This warning may seem to be out of place amidst his call to rejoice but it actually fits the context perfectly. The false doctrine these Judaizers were pushing focused on earning God's favor through human effort. This teaching cannot promote joy in the hearts of those who ascribe to it because it demotes the goodness of God while elevating the sinful efforts of men, and that only brings about failure, disappointment and death.

All human effort is incapable of earning God's approval because it is stained by sin and no one knew this better than the Apostle Paul himself; he even includes his resume' of accomplishments as evidence. Everything these Judaizers said was necessary for Gentiles believers to have, Paul had in his early life and none of these things won God's approval. The truth, as he eventually came to realize, was that they actually kept him from coming to God. Paul's conclusion was; whether they were inherited assets or assets earned by his own efforts, they were all counted as a loss to him compared to having a relationship with Jesus Christ. You would think this declaration would be amazing enough by itself but as we progress further into our text, we'll see Paul is not quite finished with his accounting class.

8 – The emphasis of what Paul is saying here is truly lost in the English translation. Yet indeed seems to just imply that Paul has more to say on the subject, which he does, but he's actually saying it much more emphatically.

In the Greek, there are 5 participles here that would be literally translated as: Yea indeed, therefore, at least, even... This list more accurately reveals the force and passion of Paul's conviction. What is that conviction? Paul didn't just count his religious pedigree as a loss – he counted all things loss compared to the excellence of the knowledge of Christ!

We must recognize that there are 2 accountings here. In **v7** Paul says I have counted. Now he says I also count. The first counting was at his conversion – everything he had inherited or achieved on his own was nothing compared to Jesus Christ and the work He had done on behalf of Paul and the rest of the world. The 2nd counting occurs right here, some 30 years later, in a Roman prison. After everything Paul had experienced – after all the sufferings, all the victories: the gospels advance across the Roman Empire; establishment of solid doctrine and emergence of strong, evangelistic churches – after everything Paul had experienced in his vast and successful ministry, he still counted it worth it to give up everything for the sake of following Jesus Christ!

It wasn't so much that those things that Paul accomplished in ministry were worthless in themselves; they weren't. They were immensely important for the church and their importance spans the last 2000 years, even into our time. No, these things weren't worthless but – compared to the greatness of the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, they really were nothing to him. What Paul's doing here is putting a personal relationship with Jesus Christ at the very center of a Christian's life. That means our personal relationship with Jesus is vastly more important than anything we will ever accomplish for Him.

Do we fully understand the ramifications of that statement? Paul was, without question, the greatest evangelist the Church or the world has ever seen; the greatest missionary, you could even throw in the title of greatest Pastor and not get much pushback. But what is he now as he is writing this letter? A prisoner of Rome! As such, he has lost the capacity to do any of the things he is most know for – with the exception of writing letters to encourage and instruct the believers in the churches he has established. Paul's lost everything! And yet, indeed, therefore, at least, even... he joyfully accepts the loss of all these things for the greatness of this personal relationship with Christ.

How many “successful” evangelists, missionaries or Pastors do you know who would joyfully accept the loss of everything they have accomplished in Christ just so they could go to prison and spend more time getting to know Jesus better? I would venture to say that would not be their first response, but neither would it be mine! Yet, after 30 years of experience in the service of Christ, Paul now has a chance to revise his balance sheet. He has time to look at all his assets and consider whether or not his accounting was correct. What was his conclusion this time – with even greater emphasis he declares that the knowledge of Jesus Christ is more valuable than all of it put together!

This wasn't just a theoretical accounting on Paul's part for as we have said and as he declared himself – he had already suffered the loss of all things so that he may gain Christ! So this wasn't just an internal spiritual exercise for Paul much like it is for us. You know, at the end of a particularly pointed sermon, when the preacher stops preaching and starts meddling into the secret areas of our lives and we begin to get uncomfortable and wish he would just move on to some less invasive point. Understand, in those moments, it's not the preacher invading the privacy of your heart – it's the Holy Spirit. In those uncomfortable moments, the Holy Spirit's calling on you to do your own accounting; to assess the things considered valuable in your life and compare them to the glorious treasure that is your relationship with Christ. Too often, it's just an internal conversation we have in the seat that's quickly forgotten when we're out the door. We know it was real for Paul because he didn't lose heart when he lost everything, as far as he was concerned – he gained Christ!

9 – Here Paul declares the true desire of his heart – to be found in Christ. In **Acts 9**, Ananias was sent by the Holy Spirit to go and pray for Paul after he was converted. He found him in a house blind and confused – but saved! In **Acts 11**, Barnabas needed help ministering to the new Gentile church growing in Antioch so he went looking for Paul and found him in Tarsus. In **Acts 24** the Jews from Asia found Paul worshipping in the Temple and turned the mob against him. In **ch2**, the church in sent Epaphroditus to bring assistance to Paul and he found him in prison. We're constantly seeing Paul found in various circumstance – some good, some down right scary; but the primary goal of Paul's heart, life and ministry was to be found in Jesus Christ! How was this possible?

What Paul gives us here in vs9 is actually a summary of the entire Book of Romans, as he deals with the heart of salvation in 1 verse. He gives us 3 important principles regarding salvation. 1st, there are 2 kinds of righteousness - the righteousness that comes from man and the righteousness that comes from God. 2nd, God can't be satisfied with any righteousness that comes from man. 3rd, God is only satisfied with His own righteousness, which He offers freely to all who believe in Jesus Christ. Thus, faith is the essential basis of salvation. This is difficult for many people to accept because most of us think we are pretty OK and we can't understand why God doesn't see it!

Let's look at it from God's perspective. The accumulation of human righteousness is kind of like playing Monopoly. The game has colorful money and is enjoyable to play, but only a fool would take Monopoly money to Rouses to buy groceries. A different kind of currency is used in the real world. It's the same spiritually. There are people who think they are collecting assets before God when they are only collecting human righteousness. God tells them that they must leave the play currency behind and deal only in His goodness. Our goodness has no value in heaven.

Here, Paul exposes the great difference between the legal relationship stressed by the Judaizers and his own personal connection with Jesus. The difference is living and trusting in your own righteousness and living and trusting in God's righteousness which is given in response to faith in Christ. Because Paul was in Him, he could renounce his own righteousness and live by the righteousness which is from God by faith. The foundation of Paul's spiritual life was in what Jesus had done for him and not in what he had done, was doing or would do for Jesus in the future. Paul disowns his own righteousness as quickly and eagerly as most people disown their own sin. But that is only because he properly held the righteousness of God in high esteem, what Jesus had won for us on the cross, which we can only receive through faith in Him. But, it's not enough for Paul to be found in Christ; he wants more...

10-11 – There are many things that distinguish Christianity from other world religions, but one of the most significant distinctions is this: Christians believe that Jesus rose again from the dead after having been crucified and that He lives today to be known by those who trust Him. The Jesus who was born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago, who lived, died and rose again, still

lives. To know Him personally, intimately, and by experience is the first and greatest goal of the believer's life. This was Paul's goal as well.

The 1st thing Paul says is that he wants to know Jesus. This isn't the same as knowing His historical life, knowing correct doctrines about Him, being familiar with His moral example or even learning about His great work on our behalf. Paul knew all of this already, probably better than any believer since, and yet, he says the desire of his heart is to know Jesus. The type of knowledge Paul was longing for could only be acquired through experience. Paul isn't saying that he wanted to know more about Jesus but that he wanted to know Jesus by experiencing His presence in his life to the point that it changed his behavior.

“Know” has several different meanings in English. It can mean to learn by serious study, like the way one knows geometry or calculus. It can refer to understanding like when we say, “I know what's going on.” Today, the definition of knowledge is mostly confined to the intellectual contents of the brain. The Bible doesn't disagree with that but also doesn't stop there. 1st, in Scripture, knowledge has a practical dimension: nothing's truly known unless it's practiced in daily life or allowed to control the conduct of the person concerned. 2nd, with knowledge between individuals, to know is to enter into the deepest personal intimacy. The Bible doesn't say Adam knew Eve because it's too shy to talk openly about sexual matters, but because this is what knowledge between persons is—deep, intimate union. Thus, having been saved wholly and solely by Christ, Paul wants to enter into the deepest possible union with Him.

Do you have that same desire to know Jesus intimately? To wake up with Him in the morning and to live each day in His presence? There's only one inexhaustible person, and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. People will disappoint us, but Jesus never will. It is entirely satisfying to know him.

Next, Paul didn't just desire to know Jesus; he also wanted to know His power. Again, Paul's not talking about an abstract knowledge about the resurrection any more than he's speaking of an abstract knowledge of Christ. Paul knew all about the resurrection. He knew the evidence for it and believed it as fact. He even proclaimed it in his preaching wherever he went. This isn't what he's referring to. He's speaking of experience. He's saying that, in addition to knowing about the resurrection, he also wants to experience its power. How? In living a godly life!

Paul knew that a life lived with Jesus meant a life of holiness. But he also knew that such a life was impossible if it depended upon his own natural strength. He knew that the natural man couldn't even understand spiritual things. He had learned by experience his own inability to live as God intended ([Rom 7:19,22-24](#)). Paul longed for deliverance from this defeat through Christ's resurrection power.

Paul was sensitive to power because he lived in a world governed and controlled by power, most of it originating in Rome and controlled by the Roman authorities. Jews were proud of their religious heritage. Greeks were proud of their wisdom. But the Romans were proud of their power. To them it was the greatest reality in the world. This was Paul's environment, and Paul respected Rome's power. He appealed to it several times. But Paul knew that it was, at best, only the 3rd strongest power in the world. The 2nd strongest was sin - it held people in a viselike grip through a tyranny far more terrible than Rome's. The strongest power was the resurrection power of Jesus—God's power. Paul knew this power could overcome sin and death and that it was far more potent than all of Rome's armies. This knowledge enabled him to write [Rom 8:1-4](#). The resurrection power of Jesus is a great reality and Paul wanted to experience this power over sin daily as he strived to live a holy life before God.

The 3rd thing Paul desires to experience is the fellowship of His sufferings. This doesn't mean Paul wanted to suffer for human sin, only Jesus could do that. He alone suffered innocently for others. What Paul wanted was to join in Christ's suffering in a different sense. He wished to stand with Christ in such a way that when the abuses and persecution that Jesus suffered also fell on him, as he knew they would, he could receive them as Jesus did. He wanted to react like Jesus, because he knew these abuses would actually draw him closer to his Lord.

This suffering will always come to the believer. Both Peter and Paul agreed on this point ([1 Ptr 4:12-13](#); [II Tim 3:12](#)). Such persecutions will come to you, if you obediently live as God commands you to. But they need not be tragic; in fact, they are a blessing as they can draw you closer to Jesus while allowing His life to be clearly seen in you. But, the knowledge of Christ's sufferings comes at a very high price, the price of total obedience. Thus, Paul writes of being conformed to His death.

To understand this, we must return to [ch2](#), where Paul speaks of Christ's obedience in death and holds it up as a pattern for all Christian conduct. He argues that Jesus was so careful to obey His Father that He laid aside His outward glory and took on human form and nature, enduring all the sufferings of this world, and He even died as a man in obedience to His Father's will. The fellowship of Christ's sufferings is won at the price of such radical and total obedience. Are you like Jesus in that? Are you careful to obey God completely, even at the expense of open persecution and real suffering? If we are to know Him, to really know Jesus, we must obey Him completely.

11 – Finally, in the last phrase of the expression of Paul's goals, he tells us why he desires to know Christ so completely and to be like Him in his death. It's so that he might attain to the resurrection from the dead. This doesn't mean Paul was afraid for his eternal security. The man who wrote [Phil 1:6](#) is not worried about his eternal security. He knows God will bring him safely to heaven. Paul's thinking about something else. He's saying that he wishes to be so much like Christ in the way he lives that people would think of him as a resurrected person even now, even before his physical death.

In Greek, resurrection literally means to 'place' or 'stand up.' In the Greek mind, living people were standing up, dead people were lying down. So, making a Greek pun, Paul says, I want to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering so that I may give the spiritually dead a preview of eternal life in action as I am standing up among those who are spiritually on their backs—spiritually dead. So, like Paul, we can say, As I walk your streets, as I come into your homes, as I shop in your stores, as I work in your office, as I mingle among the lost, I want to be so living for Christ, so outstanding for Him that people can see that I am a living one among the dead ones.

Is it your desire to be so living for Christ that you appear as a resurrected person among those who are spiritually dead? It should be, for it's God's desire for you. Can such a change happen in you? Yes it can, for God does the changing. He can turn you into the kind of person in whom Christ's holy and loving character may be seen. This is God's greatest purpose in saving you and in calling you to follow Jesus..

Have you exchanged your assets for Christ? Are you trusting in the kind of goodness that will never be accepted by God? If so, then your goodness will carry you to hell. But, if you will lay your goodness aside, counting it as loss, God will credit Jesus Christ to your account. This has always been the heart and reality of the Christian experience. If you accept the work of Christ by faith, God will provide the washing, and Jesus will be counted as your one sufficient asset forever. 😊