

**“The Reason to Live Rightly”**  
**Easter \* March 23, 2008 \* Philippians 3:7-16**

*“But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” ~ Philippians 3:13-14*

*I. First Thoughts*

*A. What did Captain Cook discover?*

*B. If I struggle with any kind of purity issue, what must I understand first?*

*II. The Message of Philippians 3 – Purity Will Not Be Had By Self-Effort But By Knowing Jesus Christ*

*A. ‘Whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss...’ – what is Paul referring to here?*

*B. ‘What is more, I consider everything a loss...’ – now what is Paul referring to?*

A Good Life

Trusting Self

Trusting God

*C. Are these things in the first column ‘bad’? What does Paul say of them?*

*III. What is ‘surpassingly greater’ about knowing Christ than the collective splendor of all these other things? (vss.9-11)*

*A. Knowing Jesus Christ is better because he meets my \_\_\_\_\_ in all of life.*

*1. What is my greatest need? (vs.9)*

*2. Why is this my greatest need?*

*B. What are people going to do the moment Jesus Christ appears?*

*C. What did Paul find out about all his self-effort? Would we be able to top him?*

*D. What must I do then to be right with God?*

*IV. Knowing Christ*

*A. What does the phrase ‘knowing Christ’ actually mean?*

*B. If I want to experience Jesus’ resurrection power, what has to happen?*

*C. What awaits us on the other side of this suffering?*

*D. Do any of us reach perfection on this side? What are we to keep on doing?*

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**I. First Thoughts**

**A. What did Captain Cook discover?**

**He encountered the native populations of Australia, and New Zealand, the Polynesian Islands, and Hawaiian Islands, and he discovered that human nature is all the same. No race is pure. There are no noble savages out there. Some had higher degrees of civilization than others, but he found thieving, lying, conniving, warfare, adultery, murder and barbarism everywhere he went. Just as he found back home in England.**

**B. If I struggle with any kind of purity issue, what must I understand first?**

**If you struggle with any kind of purity issue, addiction or bad habit or repetitive behavior that you know is wrong, you need to understand that the battle for purity is primarily a spiritual problem first which you cannot fix on your own. Being pure is not going to come about by you trying harder, or picking up a couple “How To...” books.**

**II. The Message of Philippians 3 – Purity Will Not Be Had By Self-Effort But By Knowing Jesus Christ**

**A. ‘Whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss...’ – what is Paul referring to here?**

**He’s referring to all the things he used to do, all the self-effort he used to expend so that he could be considered ‘good’ in God’s eyes, and in his own eyes, and in other’s eyes. And he lists a number of these things in the middle of verse 4.**

**B. ‘What is more, I consider everything a loss...’ – now what is Paul referring to?**

**Anything and everything that we look to besides Christ to give us a ‘good life’.**

**A Good Life**

Trusting Self

Religious rituals  
Religious identity  
Religious devotion  
Family. Fame. Fortune.  
Power. Education. Marriage.  
Houses. People to like me.  
Vacations. Health.  
Youthfulness.

Trusting God

Knowing Jesus Christ.

**C. Are these things in the first column ‘bad’? What does Paul say of them?**

**These are not bad things, in and of themselves. These *are* good things on one level. A Christian would call them ‘blessings’. But Paul takes this list, each and every item that is here, and says, “There is something better than all of this. And compared to this other thing I’m thinking about, I would rather lose all of this, than lose this one thing. In fact, compared to this other thing, all of these things I’ve got listed here are rubbish, garbage, refuse, excrement, disposable diapers, doggie-doo-doo. If push came to shove, I would gladly throw all these other things away, that I might have this one thing.**

**III. What is ‘surpassingly greater’ about knowing Christ than the collective splendor of all these other things? (vss.9-11)**

**A. Knowing Jesus Christ is better because he meets my greatest need in all of life.**

**1. What is my greatest need? (vs.9)**

**It’s the need you and I have to be found right with God.**

2. *Why is this my greatest need?*

**Don't you think when you look at all the relationships you are involved with in life, that the one which ought to get your attention the most is the one with the God who made you? Don't you think that *that's* the one above them all that you ought to make sure is right, is on good footing? "In him we live and move and have our being," the Bible says. He's the one with whom we have to do, meaning he's the one we'll have to stand before when everything is said and done, to offer an accounting for our lives, an explanation of the choices we made.**

*B. What are people going to do the moment Jesus Christ appears?*

**How clear-thinking they're suddenly going to become. How all those excuses and half-lies they've lived by will suddenly evaporate, and as the line shortens and you slowly approach his throne, and then, and then there he is locking eyes with you, what will be going through your head. All that money you just had to make. All those houses and cars you just had to buy. All that pleasure you just couldn't do without. All those things you pursued throughout your life, trusting in yourself, what will they all mean to you in that moment?**

*C. What did Paul find out about all his self-effort? Would we be able to top him?*

**He found out that his sin nature was too strong. And the weight of all his life's sinning was too heavy. It will bring him down to judgment. Even all the best things he has done, all the religious rituals he's observed, all the religious groups he's identified with, all the religious devotion he practiced, it wouldn't make any difference counteracting a lifetime's worth of selfishness and pride and stupidity. Paul, the Hebrew of Hebrews, the best of Pharisees, is condemned. And how do you think you will fare? Jesus said, "Our righteousness must exceed the Pharisee's righteousness if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven." Paul was Exhibit A of Phariseeical righteousness, and could anyone in this room outdo him in purity and zeal, could anyone here top Paul? – yet if you want to get to heaven, Jesus said, you must do better than he did.**

**It can't be done, can it? We're lost. Game over. Unless there's another way to be right with God.**

*D. What must I do then to be right with God?*

**You come to the end of trusting in yourself. And you say, "Lord Jesus forgive me. I need you to *cover my life* for its many sins. I need you to *come into my life* and help to live again, because I don't have the power in myself. Lord Jesus, I need to be right with God, but you're my only hope of obtaining that." Paul prayed those words or something similar, and was saved. You pray those words, and you'll be saved. Made right with the God who made you. You'll receive his forgiveness, you'll receive his peace, you'll receive his joy. And you'll receive *him*. The greatest gift of all.**

*IV. Knowing Christ*

*A. What does the phrase 'knowing Christ' actually mean?*

**This knowing Christ is not just knowing *about*, the way I now know about Captain Cook. It's not just head knowledge. This 'knowing' is the deepest of relationship terms. The Hebrews had this word for 'knowing' that went far behind head knowledge, the word 'yada'. Genesis 4:1 in the NIV says – "Adam lay with his wife Eve and she became pregnant". But that's not what the passage literally said in the original Hebrew. The passage literally read: "Adam *knew* Eve, and she became pregnant." And the word is 'yada'. This knowledge is so deep, so precious, so intimate, so relational that it literally creates new life. And it's this level of knowing which Paul has in mind when he says he would give up everything else for the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus.**

*B. If I want to experience Jesus' resurrection power, what has to happen?*

**The key to experiencing that resurrection power inside of you is summarized beautifully by this phrase 'the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death'. If I want to experience his resurrection in me, what has to happen? I must get ready to suffer. When you open up the door of your heart to him, and let him inside, when you begin to have fellowship with him**

through all those things we have been talking about in recent weeks, fellowshiping with him through His Word, fellowship with Him through His Body the church, fellowshiping with Him through worship and through prayer, he will begin to bring to the surface all that ugliness and selfishness and hurt and sin and pride that has imbedded itself in you, and he will begin to put it to death, that you might be not only forgiven, but healed and made new. But it will hurt. It will cause a sharing in his sufferings, it will feel like part of you is dying. Religion is far easier than this, which is why most people play at religion.

*C. What awaits us on the other side of this suffering?*

The relationship of 'knowing Christ' will cost you everything, but – and here's the real miracle – it will give you everything and more in return. Beautiful paradox – come to Jesus, die to yourself, and you discover life. Become his slave, and you discover freedom. Give away your attachment to the world's things, and you discover wealth. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," Jesus say, "and all these other things, will be given you as well."

*D. Do any of us reach perfection on this side? What are we to keep on doing?*

Paul was not perfect. Verse 12 – "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it." Paul had tasted enough of Jesus Christ's reality to know that it was real, that he wanted more, and he wasn't looking back. Which is why he says this next. Verse 13: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."