

Gaining in Jesus Christ

Bible Background • PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11

Printed Text • PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11 | Devotional Reading • MATTHEW 13:44-46

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **DISCOVER** Paul's attitude about the value of knowing Christ Jesus; **EXAMINE** feelings of achieving honors compared to feelings of living a life in Christ; and **ESTABLISH** a lifelong goal of measuring our achievements against the value of knowing Jesus Christ.

In Focus

Aaron really enjoyed going to his college class reunion. He'd seen a couple of his fraternity brothers and a few guys who were on the football team with him.

"Baby, that was my world ten years ago," he told his wife, Regina. "The frat, the football team, and partying were what I lived for in those days. And, if I say so myself, I was quite popular with the girls, too."

"I know what you mean," Regina chimed in. "Isn't it funny how your priorities change, especially after you marry and have children? I remember that all I wanted was to look good in a pair of jeans and have a date on Saturday night."

"I know," added Aaron. "Having you and the kids in my life means more to me than I ever thought anything could. But what really changed my life is having Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior."

Knowing Christ changes one's life more than anything else. Have you accepted Him into your heart and life? What changes has He brought about in you? The Apostle Paul teaches that we should strive to gain in Jesus Christ, not in worldly values.

Keep in Mind

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ."
(Philippians 3:7, KJV)

Focal Verses

KJV **Philippians 3:7** But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but

that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

The People, Places, and Times

Libertine. These people who were trying to become a part of the early Christian church believed they were essentially a soul or spirit. To them, the body was only a temporary house, having no long-term value or significance. They held a dual view of life—spiritual matter is good and physical matter is evil or worthless. They believed that the body was insignificant and therefore claimed the freedom to do with it as they pleased. The tribe of Benjamin occupies the smallest territory of any of the twelve Hebrew tribes. Despite its size, however, the tribe played a significant role in Israel's history. Saul, the first ruler of Israel, was a Benjaminite. During the latter period of the judges, the Benjamin tribe practically disappeared from history when it mistreated a Levite and his concubine (Judges 19–20). But Jews were always proud when they could trace their lineage back to one of the tribes of Israel.

Background

In chapter three, Paul warned the Philippians about the dangers of a distorted religion. He railed against the problem of having confidence in the flesh versus the knowledge of Christ. With fatherly concern for the congregation,

Paul warned them about people who could lead them astray. He was also concerned about people who trusted more in themselves and their accomplishments. None, however, had reason to boast, according to Paul. For he himself had as much reason as anyone else. Paul had a background that was impressive by any standard, but especially by Hebrew qualifications. He understood from personal experience what it meant to have all the prized religious values, virtues, and achievements, only to discover that it was not the be-all and end-all of life. Paul was born out of the tribe of Benjamin and was circumcised on the eighth day, according to the Law. Paul was a “Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Philippians 3:5). He was trained and educated as a Pharisee and used that knowledge to persecute the church. If anyone had reason to place confidence in his own ability and knowledge, it was Paul.

At-A-Glance

1. All Is Gain Through Christ
(Philippians 3:7–9)
2. What It Means to Know Christ
(vv. 10–11)

In Depth

1. All Is Gain Through Christ (Philippians 3:7–9)

If ever a person had reason to have confidence in himself and his intellectual abilities, it was Paul. Yet, even though Paul had impeccable credentials, which gave him standing in the Jewish hierarchy, he gave it all up when he encountered Christ. One can only give up that which one has, and one cannot give up what one does not have. Paul was able to speak with authority concerning the worthlessness of something that he once highly valued. Paul told the Philippians about his own heritage and accomplishments (vv. 5–6). Concerning his heritage, there were four gains, which he now counted as loss for Christ's sake. First, he was circumcised on the eighth day, which meant he was born a Jew, not a proselyte, or one who has converted to Judaism. Second, he was pure Hebrew, not of mixed descent, as were many in Palestine during that day (v. 5). Third, Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin, which had remained loyal to the Davidic line when the kingdom divided. Fourth, he was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews," a phrase often used to designate those who had retained the national language (v. 5, KJV). Though settled in a Greek city, Paul's family had continued to speak the Hebrew language.

Concerning his expertise in the Law, Paul was a Pharisee, part of a strict sect whose life pursuit was to obey the Law in every detail. In his pursuit of righteousness, Paul was no exception. He was so devoted to his way of life that he gladly and eagerly—and probably with a great sense of arrogance and superiority—persecuted those in the church.

Obviously a man of great intellectual ability, Paul came to realize that no legalistic training or adherence could save him or anyone else. Paul did give up things that were considered evil or worthless. He willingly walked away from a treasured lifestyle held in high esteem by his

family and community. What he now counted as a loss was not a former state of wickedness but of strict adherence to the Law. Yet, whatever advantages Paul had in his former life were nothing in light of the salvation he was now granted through the saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. Now Paul considered his former treasures to be worthless, like "dung" (excrement, v. 8).

2. What It Means to Know Christ (vv. 10–11)

Paul's surrender of legalism and self-righteousness did not cause him to go to the other extreme of libertinism. He did not understand freedom from legalism to translate into lawlessness. As it was when he was a Pharisee, righteousness remained his consuming goal. Now, however, he pursued righteousness from God, found through faith in Christ, not the self-righteousness of his previous life.

Righteousness is not a human achievement; it is the work of God in someone who has the openness of faith to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. In order to know Christ, Paul gave up the life he once held so dear. His former life became all the more meaningless with the recognition that human effort is useless in attaining the righteousness that God requires.

Therefore, our righteousness can only come through our faith in Christ. Paul wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. To know Christ is not just an intellectual understanding of who He is. It is the most intimate relationship with Him. The closest example is the relationship between the husband and the wife. To know Christ is to experience His life. When we suffer, we are carrying our cross and experiencing a bit of what Christ endured for us. It is a privilege to be able to become one with Him as He hung there for you and me.

In order to live with Christ, we must die with Him. We cannot go back to the Cross of Golgotha. However, the Christ who was

victorious there can come to us and allow us to be conformed to Him and His ways. In life, we can have partial knowledge of His existence. That knowledge will be made complete in the Resurrection from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is important to us for three reasons. First, His resurrection guarantees that our human bodies have great importance. It was in His earthly body that He died upon the Cross and in His heavenly body that He rose again. The Resurrection points to God's stamp of approval upon our physical bodies, His creation. Secondly, His resurrection is the guarantee that we shall rise again. While we don't have our beginnings in eternity, God shares His eternality with us beginning the day of our conversion. And third, His resurrection blesses us with the wonderful joy of His promise to be with us forever.

Search the Scriptures

1. Why did the Apostle Paul count everything a loss for Christ (Philippians 3:7–8)?
2. Paul deemed that his own righteousness would be of the _____ (v. 9).
3. The righteousness that is of God is by _____ (v. 9).

Discuss the Meaning

Paul wanted to really know the Lord—the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. What does that mean?

Liberating Lesson

In order to know Christ and have a personal relationship with Him, we need to be willing to make sacrifices in our lives. Sometimes, we have to give up old friends. Other times, we have to make time and take time to read and meditate on His Word, and engage in prayer

and fasting. So often in our fast-paced society, we have to be deliberate about making time for God. Are you determined to do so?

Application for Activation

Decide this week to spend meaningful time with God through studying His Word, meditating on it, and prayer. As you spend time with Him, ask Him to help you prioritize your time so that fellowship with Him will become first priority.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

Sources:

- Butler, Trent, ed. *Holman Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991.
- "In Pictures: Philippines Crucifixions." BBC News, World: Asia-Pacific. March 29, 2002. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/1901095.stm> (accessed October 26, 2011).
- New Testament Greek Lexicon. Bible Study Tools.com. <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/> (accessed October 26, 2011).

Say It Correctly

Libertines. **LIB**-or-teens.
Proselytes. **PROS**-uh-lites.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

The Value of Each One
(Matthew 18:10–14)

TUESDAY

You Are of More Value
(Matthew 10:26–30)

WEDNESDAY

The Value of the Spiritual
(Romans 2:17–29)

THURSDAY

The Value of the Kingdom
(Matthew 13:44–53)

FRIDAY

The True Value in Following Jesus
(Luke 9:23–27)

SATURDAY

No Value in Earthly Achievements
(Philippians 3:1–6)

SUNDAY

The Surpassing Value of
Knowing Christ
(Philippians 3:7–11)

Notes
