

That I may know Him

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[0 : 00] Chapter 3, with particular reference to verse 10. That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death.

When you read this chapter and the following one, you will note that amongst the exhortations that Paul gives to the readers of his letter in Philippi is this one.

Brethren, rejoice in the Lord. And to understand what Paul means by that, you have to take that exhortation within its context.

He is speaking here about what God has or had done for himself. He who was the great self-righteous Pharisee, who thought that he could earn and work his way to heaven.

He had discovered that unless God saved him, no one and nothing would. And it is in that light that we are to understand this exhortation, rejoice in the Lord.

[1 : 47] You see, some people may say that it isn't always that easy to rejoice. Perhaps you may feel a bit down in the mouth and someone says to you, well, why worry? Cheer up.

But when they give you that kind of counsel, they don't give you a foundation upon which you are to cheer up and not to worry and so on.

It's not very well to say, why worry? Keep your chin up. It's not very well to say these things. But you have to give people reason for being like that.

Well, here Paul gives the best reason of all for rejoicing. It is to rejoice in the Lord. And the particular aspect of the Lord's work that he here highlights is his power, his ability to save.

His ability to deliver us from the guilt and from the power and from the dominion of sin.

[2 : 58] Now, as you know, this is something which lies at the very heart of the gospel of the grace of God. Running right through it is this declaration that God and God alone is the Savior of God.

Sinner. And in this chapter, Paul is seeking to illustrate that from his own life. And he shows that no work, no religion, no privilege, no attainments, none of these things will avail for salvation.

It isn't a case of God. It isn't a case of who I am. It isn't a case of what I've had or what I've been.

It's not a case of any of these things. It is all, he says, of God. God saves and God alone saves.

And in the beginning of this chapter, you see how Paul, in using very, very strong language, brings before his readers and before us, that he would never entertain the thought of anybody else being responsible for his salvation but God.

[4 : 33] So he says, beware of people who teach otherwise. And in the verses that follow right through from 4 to the text before us here today, he shows that the, as I said earlier, that salvation is not based upon any privilege that any one of us may have or may have had.

Salvation, if salvation does anything at all, and there's as many things, it does this. It removes from us every element of self-boasting, self-reliance, self-confidence, self-righteousness, so that at the end of the saving process in the life of the individual, none of that will be left.

If any man, says Paul, writing again to the Corinthians, if any man will boast, if any man will glory, let him glory in the Lord.

And this is that process which begins when we are saved by the power of his grace, and a process which continues, strengthened and fed and nourished by his grace, until the finished product is presented faultless before the Father's throne with exceeding joy.

Well, that is Paul's theme here. And another way in which he brings before us the thrust that salvation is all of God is by comparing or contrasting rather two words of which the New Testament is very fond, our own righteousness, and the righteousness of God.

[6 : 43] Now, in the interest of time, when one would hope for clarity and simplicity, let me put it just like this. There are two ways, or rather one of two ways in which you today can hope to receive acceptance before God.

One of two ways. You come before God looking for acceptance and looking for salvation and looking for the blessing of God, either on the basis of your own righteousness, your own works, your own attainments, your own ability, your own merits.

You come either on that basis and you say to God, God, here am I, like the Pharisee of old, bless me, accept me, receive me, give me, because of what I am, what I've done, and what I've been, and what I hope to be.

You either come on that ground, or else you renounce that way of acceptance and you come on the basis of the righteousness of God.

In other words, you come in the name of Christ. You come pleading his merits, pleading the worth of his work, and you say to God, God, receive me, bless me, accept me, not because of what I am, but in the name of Jesus and for the sake of Jesus, and because of what he has done.

[8 : 12] Now, that is what Paul really is doing here. He says to the Philippians and he says to us, I discovered, he said, that I couldn't ask God to bless me on any other ground, for any other reason, but for the sake of Jesus Christ.

I renounced my own righteousness. I gave it up. the word seemingly that is used here is the word that is used for throwing excess cargo overboard.

I threw it away. I got rid of it. And I have no doubt that it might have been a very difficult exercise for him to have got rid of all the privileges that he lists here, the things that he was trusting and that if any man in the world he says, thought that God was going to bless him because of what he was himself and what he had, I was that man.

And look at what I had. Look at all the privilege I had as a Jew, the privilege I had as a Pharisee, the righteousness of the life that I lived, the things that I did, my moral integrity, my uprightness, my high principles.

Look at the kind of man I was. And I was so righteous, so religious, so zealous that I thought that any, that the Christian faith, I thought the Christian faith was an incursion upon the glory and the dignity and the being of Almighty God and I tried to get rid of it in God's name.

[10 : 04] That's the kind of man I was. But he says, I discovered that I had to give all these things up as the ground of my acceptance before God.

I count them all but loss. I count them all but done, righteous, manure. Couldn't bear to look at these things as the ground of my acceptance before God.

Can it be? before I come to the words of the text. Can it be that there are people here today, that there may be someone here today who is really accepting, looking for God's blessing upon his or her life just because they are the type of people they think they are.

How many of you think that you're as good as anybody else? Perhaps better than most. A few weeks ago you saw some people sitting here at the Lord's table.

Who knows but the thought may have flashed through your mind. I'm as good as he is or she is. If they are there I have every right to be there. Is that the kind of thinking upon which you grow in your acceptance before God?

[11 : 23] The type of person you are. The things that you do. perhaps you are basing your acceptance on that kind of thing without realizing it.

I would challenge you to look anew today at the ground of your acceptance before God. Well, Paul had no doubt.

These things he says are lost. Are lost. I prefer the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. I've got rid of my own righteousness.

I want rid of my own righteousness and I don't want to look at it. I prefer the righteousness of Christ. The righteousness which God provided. God's way of acceptance provided by God worked out by Jesus available to me through faith in him.

That's the ground upon which I want to come to God. And I want to he says because I want to know him. And I want to know the power of his resurrection. And I want to know the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death.

[12 : 34] Now you will notice that here there are not just these three or four things that he wanted but in the context again he speaks for example in verse 8 of wanting to win Christ.

And then in verse 9 he speaks of wanting to be found in Christ. And in verse 10 he wants to know Christ. And he wants to know the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.

And he wants to be made conformable unto his death. Well for a little this morning could we just look very briefly at these thoughts that Paul here brings before us as he expresses his desire his wish with reference to the Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all I want he says to win Christ. Now the thought that may immediately cross your mind in that connection is this if Paul is saying that a Christian a convert is someone who gives up basing his hopes for salvation upon his own works surely there is that element in this desire I want to win Christ.

Because when you strive to win something you're not with or in any kind of sporting activity you try to win something you strive with might and main to win that trophy to win that medal you put everything into it and your winning of it is dependent upon your own efforts in that particular activity. [14:37] Some of you for example in the past few weeks are engaged in this kind of activity with the local festival. Some of you are involved in this some of you young people are and you're using all your effort to win this particular trophy.

Now in salvation when Paul says I want to win Christ remember one thing he has already told us that in no way is he striving to win Christ on the basis of his own efforts we can put that to one side he has already established that salvation is not of works it is of grace it is all of God what does he mean when he says I want to win Christ well you see what he's saying surely is this when you want to win something you've set your affections on it you've set your mind on that thing all your efforts are channeled in that one direction and what you say really is that this is the thing above all things this is the most prized possession of all there is nothing that you can put beside this at the present time it's what you it's what you prize most of all

Paul here says what I prize most of all is the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and my Saviour and in order to have him I have to lay aside my own works and my own efforts and my own attainments and my own privileges I've got to give him up because a case of this it's a case of having these things without Christ or having Christ without these things and I want to win him I want to have him this is the most prized possession of all nothing must come between me and him consider on himself consider from the point of view what he has done and what he's doing what he is yet to do considering all these things there is nothing in the world I value more than

Christ and in his interests these things have to go and this is the language of every believing heart in every age whatever it is that comes between you and the Lord whatever it is that you're making the ground of your acceptance before God whatever it is in his interests it has to go Christ is the most precious possession of all and then he goes on to speak of him in this term I want he says to be found in in verse nine now this opens before us some very interesting avenues of thought you know as you read your Bible you will discover this that when the Bible and this is you know one of the very favorite prepositions in the whole Bible being found in

Christ in Christ Jesus and it speaks to us of the union that exists between Christ and his people now if you read through your Bible you will discover for example that it speaks of this union as having existed from all eternity we were chosen in him before the foundation of the world and then the Bible tells us that we were we died in Christ and that we rose together with him or in him and what we are told is this that not only were united to Christ from all eternity not only were chosen by God in Christ from all eternity whatever that may mean we'll leave that to one side at the moment when Jesus came into the world to suffer and to die for those who were united to him and for those who were given to him by God the Father when Jesus came came we were united to him when he suffered we were united to him when he went into the grave we were united when he rose we were united when he ascended we were united to the

[19:51] Lord Jesus Christ we were never severed from him in whom we were chosen from all eternity and when we are saved by the power of his grace we are saved as those who are united to the Lord Jesus Christ we are found in him and this was Paul's great prayer I want to be found in him at all times in every situation in life to be found in him as the one who shelters me as the rock of the ages in whom I have protection in whom I am secure in whom I am safe in whom I have all my life and from whom comes all my spiritual provision

I want to be found in him as I live and I want to be found in him when I die blessed are the dead who die again in the Lord and perhaps there is no passage in the whole Bible which indicates and illustrates with greater clarity the wonder of the union that exists between Christ and his people quite like the words that Jesus addressed to Paul when he was saved on the road to Damascus and that's the reference and that's the experience that Paul is speaking about in this chapter in this

third chapter and that very first encounter that he had with the God of grace exercising his gracious power in his life that Lord spoke to him these wonderful words Saul Saul why art thou persecuting me and at the very beginning of the spiritual pilgrimage

Paul discovered the wonder of the union that exists between Christ and his people they are as closely identified as that there was that man on the road to Damascus to arrest people haul them out of their homes imprison them and no doubt be perfectly prepared to be a party to their death just because they were Christians and he discovered that day that they were that closely identified to Christ and united to Saul you are persecuting me when you are persecuting them that is why the psalmist can play like this Lord as the apple of thine eye me keep in eye wings shade me close the third thing that he wants here is to know Christ that I may know him now of course there's a problem here and the problem is trying to make out what does this knowledge mean how can

I know what is it to know the Lord Jesus Christ is it not sufficient for me to thumb my way through the Bible learn as much as I can for example the children in Sabbath schools and meeting this afternoon learning more of the catechism more passages from the word of God off by heart is that what it means to know Jesus Christ no it's not there is nothing wrong with amassing as much knowledge as you can of the word fill your mind with as much truth as you can memorize as much as you can of the word of God it will stand you in good stead I can assure you in days to come but the knowledge here is not just an intellectual knowledge by all means I said let us have that knowledge knowledge no one of us has sufficient grasp intellectually of the truth that speaks to us of the Lord

Jesus Christ you don't know as much about him intellectually as you ought to know you have to know more but you see the knowledge that Paul here speaks of is not just intellectual knowledge it is as someone has put it it is a relationship of love in mind and heart it is that knowledge of which the Bible speaks that tells us that we are to delight in the Lord Jesus that we are to adore him that we are to desire him that we are to be satisfied with him and refreshed by him it suggests to us that we ought to be swallowed up in him and be swallowed up with him really I suppose one of the best terms you could use for this is just simply to say that you want to be in love with him that I may know him you want to be that closely identified you want to get to know him better as your

[25 : 34] Lord and as your saviour listen to this let me quote what someone said to you says about this speaking about knowledge it is quite possible for a man not to have the element of living experience and yet be able to argue himself into a belief of the messiahship of the son of Mary it is quite possible for him without a saving interest in the themes of a study to stand at the manger and to prove the babes through humanity it is quite possible for him to gaze on his miracles and to deduce from them a divine commission without bowing to his authority yes and quite possible for him to linger at the cross and to see in it a mysterious and complete expiation without accepting the pardon and the peace which the blood of atoning of atonement secure that is this knowledge that Paul here wants does not refer to experience but to experience in other words it is not a knowledge from without that he is speaking about but a knowledge rising up from within him

I want to know him I want to know him as my own I want to know him as my teacher my savior my prophet my priest my king I want to know him as my my meat and my drink I want to know him as my leader my guide I want to know him as the one who speaks to me as the one who comes to me as the one who touches me I want to know him as the one who visits me by his power sheds our broadest love in my heart as the one whose touch moves people to the response of faith and love I want to know him and I want to know his voice I want to know the Lord Jesus Christ is that the way you want to know him is that the way you do know him today and then there's another thing here I want to know the power of his resurrection now whether this refers to the power by which he was resurrected or to the power that comes to him as the resurrected Lord it probably doesn't make all that difference we will take the second a view on that that he's speaking here of the power of the resurrected Christ who said all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth now then this power the power the power of the resurrected Lord is a power and the only power that can deal with our sin with your sin and with mine it is the power that deals with the guilt of our sin the power that deals with the influence with the power of sin itself in our own lives you know my friend that sin is a destructive power it destroys but the power of the resurrected

Christ renews renews restore resurrects the soul and sin that lies it works revival in the heart it communicates strength to people who have no strength themselves it enables us to respond to the claims of God upon us when we have no power to respond it enables us to walk as he would have

us walk when we want to go our own way and do our own thing it enables us to do his will when we want to do our own will it is that power which lifts us above the unfeeling power of sin as it operates in our own lives just as

Jesus in his resurrection rose to newness of life so does the believer the convert by the exercise of the power of God the power of the risen Lord in his life so does he rise to newness of life but it isn't just something that happens in conversion it's something that goes on proceeds as the Christian develops in the exercise of his Christian life he is raised to newness of life not raised above and beyond the things that are going to pain him and trouble him and annoy him in this world it isn't the power that raises you to the level of victorious living so that sin is no longer a problem in your life it is never the view that Paul presents to us but it is a power that enables you to overcome that enables you to resist that enables you to strive against sin and resist temptation and overcome temptation as he overcame it himself the power that exerts a winning and a sanctifying influence in your life and Paul's plea is this give me more of that

[32 : 22] I want to know the power of his resurrection but you see he could only know it as he knew the resurrected Lord himself and there is this third thing the fellowship of his sufferings now one of the interesting things here as someone brings it out is this have you noticed the order power or life followed by sufferings but if you examine the story of Jesus in the gospels you will discover that the order is reversed he suffered first and then he rose with newness of life after resurrection but for you and for me the order is reversed the only way in which you and I can know the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ is by first of all being empowered by his life and by his spirit the question then is this does this mean fellowship with them when I suffer or does it mean that my sufferings bring me into contact with him in his sufferings well again

I suppose you can take both points of view it is one of the great privileges of the Christian faith that as you suffer for Jesus so you experience fellowship with him fellowship with him take the three men remember these three men in the fiery furnace in the book of Daniel Shadrach Meshach and Abednego they had there in their sufferings the presence of the son of man similarly with you and with me when we suffer for Jesus you are upheld by the knowledge that he's with you and all the afflictions he was afflicted and the angel of his presence saved them the Lord's presence enables you to endure suffering but there's another side to it as well there is the necessity that you and I will enter into and experience something of the sufferings of

Christ himself and it may be it may very well be if this is construed as a prayer it is it is it is really wonderful to think of this that if this is a prayer from the lips of Paul what he's actually praying for is the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ to know more of the sufferings of Jesus isn't strange if this is what it means that any man would ask for that and if he did ask for that he received an answer from God and I measured beyond what he had ever asked for before he left this world and yet it is true of you and of me that in some measure at least we must know something of the reproach of Jesus Christ something of the afflictions of Jesus Christ something of the of the awfulness of the of the of of of being forsaken in this world feeling because he wasn't we don't believe that he was absolutely forsaken and we don't believe that we are forsaken at any time by

God we know that we're not he will never leave no forsaken but there are times when you may feel forsaken but what is that compared with the forsakeness that he experienced you and I will feel lonely in this world but what is that compared to the loneliness that he had to go through in this world you and I may feel betrayed and denied by others so what what about his betrayal and the denial that he had to that he had to endure you and I will be misunderstood was he not misunderstood you and I will have enemies because of our attachment to Jesus what about the enemies that he had if you're a Christian here today in some measure or other be it great or small you will experience fellowship with him in his sufferings though I don't particularly like you in the tarot we will have what I'm trying to express in our measure at least we will have our Gethsemanes we will have our Calvaries but oh how far removed from his and yet there will be a taste of it in our mouth as well and he heavily says to drink of the cup that I will drink of very truly he says you will drink of it yes we will drink of it but we will not drink it as he drank it but we will have our share of it and our own taste of it and you know what it does do you know what suffering with Jesus does do you know what experiencing something of the fellowship of his sufferings do you know what it does it brings you together closer because this is what sufferings tend to do they create a closer tie and they forge a closer fellow feeling there is a companionship and sorrow which form the most enduring ties as someone put it afflicted hearts cling close together this is what we

have if you remember when we studied a few

[38 : 51] Sabbath eves ago the 200 two mails they were cast down they were suffering together they were afflicted but that brought them together and so what you have to go through in the name of Jesus for the sake of Jesus brings you closer to him and as you are brought closer to him then you discover fellowship with him in the things that you have to suffer for finally being made conformable unto his death and again one might not be very sure what this exactly means but just let me put it again in the insubrevity and simplicity like this can it mean that Paul is saying simply I want to be like Christ in his death which of course suggests the thought immediately to some minds that he wanted to die like

Jesus died the death of that he wanted to die literally a death of crucifixion but that's not what he means surely does he not mean this that he wanted to have the same spirit as Jesus had in his death and what spirit did the Lord have in his death well he had this spirit he was doing this in our interests he was dying for us and this is the mind that in the very previous chapter this apostle is commending to the Philippians let the mind that was in Christ be in you let the spirit that animated him animate you let the mortars that he had motivate you cultivate his mind be like him in all that he did even in his death and there was something else he died why did

Jesus die he died for us he died because we were sinners he took our sins and it was necessary for him to die for our sins surely the way in which you and I are to live surely there is a very real connection between the way that you live as a Christian and the sin for which Jesus died sin is it is it not true that you and I have to die to sin that we have to die to sin daily is it not true that as you and I die that we will have to suffer you see Jesus died and he suffered in his death he suffered in his life and he suffered in his death don't you run away with the idea that you can be a Christian and die into sin without suffering as well this is the problem with us today

I feel that we are not prepared to endure the pain and the agony of crucifying the flesh of jettisoning sin throwing it overboard like we throw our self-righteousness and our religion and our privileges if we are making these the ground of our acceptance before God they've got to go well you and I have to learn this our sins have to go as well there are some things that we cannot bring into the life of faith that we live into the life of dependence and trust upon the Lord Jesus Christ and just as he suffered unto death for sin so are you and I to suffer as we die to sin and the agony as someone has put it of nailing out sins to the cross daily has to be endured but he suffered he endured he endured willingly and let you and

I endure willingly as well let us remember the cost of discipleship as there was a cost to him so there will be a cost to you and to me you cannot entertain the thought of being a Christian without counting the cost but then you see my friend as you live like that remember that you have the inestimable privilege of this saviour this lord standing by you empowering you by his grace to meet his demands and to live the way that he would have you live what is your own relationship to the lord jesus christ today are you united to him by faith is he your most prized possession is he the one that you want particularly to get to know do you know his power in your life and is it you desire to be conformed to him in the way in which he died is it you desire to live to the glory of god as he did to have his mind to put your own will to one side in the interest of his will to put your own interest to one side in his interest as he did for us he made himself of no reputation he was obedient to death even the death of the cross and as you live like that is it your privilege today to know what it is to have a fellowship of the lord jesus christ in all that you have to endure for him and in his name let us pray oh to thou bless us and to thou help us and to thou guide us we thank thee for the word that thou was given we pray for grace today that our hope may be in thee oh lord we we thank thee for thy grace and we bless thee for thy forbearance we pray that as this day unfolds that we may know thy presence help us in all our duties and responsibilities and prepare us for our evening worship this night we pray for thy servant who preaches even now in the seminary may he know thy blessing and may he know the unction of the holy spirit in his ministry forgiving sin for jesus sake amen