

To Know Christ

Philippians 3:3-14

Pastor Hangyul Cho 23/8/20

Sermon Summary

The Apostle Paul is writing his letter to the Philippians from lockdown – a Roman prison. A good spot to write about what really matters in life. Remember Roman prisons were nothing like the hotel atmosphere of modern prisons; although a prison is still a prison no matter the state of one's furnishings.

He begins by reminding us **NOT** to put confidence in the flesh, not to boast about or pump up anything done or achieved in our own strength (Philippians 3:3). All the things Paul had accomplished in his past life – distinguished as they were (he had a brilliant intellect) – amounted to **nothing** compared to knowing Christ (v. 8). Paul stresses that life is not about things accomplished, failures struggled through, mistakes made, harm done, nor the opposite, success and achievements, things that make you proud. Paul considers them **all** rubbish (v.8). All these fleshly matters are insignificant and shallow when contrasted to knowing Christ intimately.

3 Points to Ponder to know Christ

1. **WHAT are we to do?** Paul exhorts us to press on (v.14). He wants us to “know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like Him in His death” (v.10). But knowing Him in what way? Pastor Han knows a lot **about** Cristiano Ronaldo, but he doesn't know him personally. Knowing Jesus in the way Paul exhorts us, is to know Him so intimately that one “gains Christ” and is “found in him” (v.8-9).

And, how do we **suffer** as Jesus did? Every time we stand up for the truth, we will be persecuted. We must, for example, care for the disadvantaged, such as the unborn child in a mother's womb. Yet, if we do so, we will be shoved backwards by a sizeable portion of society. That's persecution.

Verse 10 concludes with Paul's stating that he wants to be like Christ in His death. What does that mean? When we die to ourselves, we become intimate with Jesus. And that is the way we attain the resurrection from our fleshly state (v.11).

The acronym GOAT stands for **Greatest Of All Time**. Pastor Han thinks Ronaldo is the GOAT in football. He also thinks that Paul is the GOAT in Christianity. [In the agree/disagree contest that's 1-all so far!] However, Paul accepts that even he has not attained perfection – so **he presses on** (V. 12). One of the side effects of lockdown is that we get to take stock of what really matters to us. Paul states the point of life is not to worry over the spilt milk in our lives but to push on to find true life in Christ.

2. **HOW do we focus?** Forget the past, focus on the future. That's what Paul says in verses 13-14. Much of our past may be distasteful; it may also have many successes. Both **must be forgotten if we are to know Christ**. Our CV's have no importance at the border of eternal life. Do not wallow in the negative things of your life. Once you have sought Christ and repented God thinks no more of your past – so why should you? But don't relish your past successes (even Christian ones) lest they dominate your new search for the deep things of God. You can never rest on your laurels, because you have yet to reach what lies ahead. Your future – your goal – your prize – is, one day, to see Jesus face to face.

When Jesus becomes our focus, then everything we do from that moment onward becomes our future.

3. **WHY do we do that?** Because Christ has taken hold of us (v.12b). If God has already **made** (not will make) you His own, any burden of failure you carry has already been lifted from your shoulders. He has it now. So, relax and give thanks with joy. We mess up all the time; we still sin, yet the gospel says we have freedom to fail. If you do, confess, then get back up again and continue to press on.

Christianity is a busy life. We all feel the burden of it from time to time. But we ought to remember each time we feel depressed, no matter the degree, Christ has already made us His own! You are a child of God. Don't beat yourself up in despair. Give the weight of any failure to Jesus. Realise and enjoy the beauty of His love and acceptance. You are a child of His light.

A few Points to Ponder with Family and Friends

1. Did you consider yourself a Christian before you came to know Christ intimately? (Don't worry you are in a long tradition that includes Martin Luther, John Wesley and Hangyul Cho).
2. When did you come to know Jesus intimately? What difference has it made in your life?
3. Have you seen an increase in your participation in His sufferings? Describe.
4. Have you been successful in forgetting what is behind? Explain.
5. How do you strain toward what is ahead?

Prayer Points

Life Group Prayer Suggestions

Please pray for those struggling with the latest lockdown... pray for those who have lost their jobs, pray for those who have families overseas.

Please pray for opportunities for Christians world-wide to share the gospel in this time of crisis... for the gospel to somehow reach those who have not yet been reached.

A Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Lord of all, we praise You that You neither slumber nor sleep and You are watching over all people, with a special love for Your children.

In these dangerous times, grant us Your grace and peace to stay calm and to overcome fear. You have given us faith, hope, and love. You have given us power and a sound mind. Your Word says that You will keep in perfect peace those whose eyes are fixed on You.

Move us to selflessly extend comfort and help to the isolated and lonely, just as we receive comfort from You in times of difficulty.

Grant our government wisdom and understanding as they implement measures and strategies in the fight against COVID-19.

Enable our health officials and medical personnel as they attend to the sick and vulnerable. Lead the medical scientists around the world who are working to develop a vaccine for the virus.