



Transcendent Joy: Learning How to Rejoice No Matter What

Message #16: Safeguarding Your Faith (Philippians 3:10-11) – March 19, 2023 - Pastor Jeff

- The sum total of the world's human knowledge is estimated to be 250 exabytes. To put this in more understandable terms, one exabyte is having an office of 100 people search the web for 57,077 years. To add to this mind-blowing reality, experts tell us that human knowledge is doubling every 12 hours. The question that should be asked is, how is all this knowledge making us smarter, better, wiser or most essentially, prepared for eternity?
- Paul brings up the topic of knowledge and elevates a certain kind of knowledge that excels all others, that is, to know Christ as the incomparable and “surpassing value” of life (Phil. 3:8). So all the exabytes of human knowledge do not compare to knowing the highest level of knowledge. Jesus said, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3; John 10:14; 1 John 5:20; Jer. 31:33-34)

In verses 10-11 of Philippians chapter 3, Paul describes four special features of this “surpassing value”.

① Know the Lord in a personal way (3:10a: “that I may know Him”)

- It is easy to know things about people whether you have a relationship with them or not, but to know them in a personal way requires time, interaction, and relationship-building. Paul uses the word for knowledge that is more than just knowing the facts about Jesus Christ, but it is having a personal experiential knowledge of Him.
- There is the initial saving knowledge of Jesus Christ whereby you know the truth about who Jesus is (Savior, Lord) and what He has done (lived a perfect life and became an acceptable sacrifice to God to pay for our sin)
- There is an ongoing sanctifying knowledge of Jesus Christ whereby we deepen our understanding of Him, grow in our love for Him, and progressively find our satisfaction in Him. We come to know that He is “my Lord” (v. 8)

② Know the Lord in a powerful way (3:10b: “and the power of the resurrection”)

- No one can be delivered from their sins or receive the gift of eternal life without the power of the risen Lord working on your behalf.
- “The power of the resurrection” has three applications to our life:
 1. It gives us a powerful conversion. You were “dead in your transgressions and sins”, but He “make us alive together with Christ...and raise us up with Him” (Eph. 2:5-6; Rom. 6:4-5)
 2. It gives us a powerful eternal body when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:42-53).
 3. It gives us a powerful life enablement that can defeat temptation, lead a holy life and boldly proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. This power enables us to claim His promises, endure trials, say no to sin, live a righteous life, and enjoy God’s gift of joy while living in a world of despair.

3 Know the Lord in a painful way (3:10c: “and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”)

- Normal people do not pursue this kind of knowledge unless you are seeking to serve the Lord Jesus Christ who showed how suffering can serve for our good. If we are to know Christ, we will learn how to “entrust our souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right” (1 Pet. 4:19) just like He Himself did (1 Pet. 2:23)
- Hebrews 5:8 says, “Jesus learned obedience through the things He suffered”. His suffering for our sins on the cross was the ultimate test of His submission to His Father’s will.
- There is a physical pain that motivates us to look to His unique care and plan for us and there’s a spiritual pain (“being conformed to His death”) that seeks to daily live out our death to sin by being united with Him (Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:5; Rom. 6:1-11; Rom. 8:13) and our denial of self (Luke 9:23)

4 Know the Lord in a perfected way (3:11)

- At first, it appears that Paul is contradicting himself in making it sound like he is working by his own effort to “attain the resurrection from the dead” and reach the perfected state of being glorified. We know this isn’t true since he just told us (Phil. 3:9) as in many other passages that it is not possible (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).
- There are two possible ways to view what Paul is trying to communicate. This verse literally reads: “if somehow I may attain to the out-resurrection among the dead ones”. We know that Paul is not demonstrating an uncertainty about his salvation since he consistently teaches us about the security God promise of our salvation.

- Paul may be referring to the future resurrection of the righteous when Jesus returns and we will be ultimately perfected in soul and body.
- It seems better to understand that Paul is speaking about his humble hope (recognizing the weakness of his flesh and how he sees himself as the least among the apostles and saints) that he will fully realize what it means in this life to experience the resurrection life of Christ being lived out through Him. This supports the context where Paul says he hasn't yet attained this reality in experience, but he presses on (v. 12-14)