

**Second Baptist Church, Lincoln, NE**  
**October 4, 2009**  
**Pastor Steve Wisthoff**

**Phil. 3:4b-14                      Knowing Christ**

4b. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

<sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee;

<sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

<sup>7</sup> But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

<sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

<sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

<sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

<sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> 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.

<sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,

<sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

A Quaker had a sign put on a vacant piece of land next to his home: "THIS LAND WILL BE GIVEN TO ANYONE WHO IS TRULY SATISFIED." A wealthy farmer, who was riding by, stopped to read the sign and said to himself, "Since our friend the Quaker is so ready to part with this plot, I might as well claim it before someone else does. I am a rich man and have all I need, so I certainly qualify." With that he went up to the door and explained his intentions.

"And art thou truly satisfied?" the Quaker asked. "I am, indeed, for I have everything I need." "Friend," said the Quaker, "if thou art satisfied, then why dost thou want the land?" As we read this portion this morning of Philippians, we see the warm and passionate side of Paul concerning his relationship and commitment to Christ. Absolutely NOTHING in his life, past or present can compare to the joy and richness of knowing Christ. He has found complete satisfaction in knowing Christ and nothing can compete with that joy.

What is the greatest desire of a Christian? Throughout Scripture, the great men and women of God say that their passion is to truly know Him. Moses said to God: "**I pray You show me Your glory**" (Exodus 33:18). David prayed: "**As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for You, O God**" (Psalm 42:1). And Paul says (in today's text) that his heart longs to "**know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings**" (Philippians 3:10). The greatest desire of a true Christian is to know God. Every other desire pales in significance to this one.

Did you know that it's possible to be a Christian and not really know God? John 14:8-9 tells us that Phillip, after following Jesus for a number of years, says to Him, "**Lord, show us the**

Father." And Jesus replied, "Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me?" Maybe the problem is the word KNOW. When the Bible talks about knowing God, it's not referring to a merely intellectual exercise. Knowing God does not mean knowing facts about God. To know God is not just reciting His biblical resume or hearing testimony of what He has done in someone else's life. Knowing God involves encountering Him and finding out that He is who He says He is.

The book of Philippians is great because Paul is speaking here to his favorite church. The amazing thing about his words is that they are penned while he is sitting in jail. Rather than sitting in self-pity saying, "Why me? Why is this happening to me? God must be punishing me!" He is instead rejoicing in his suffering and his conversation is focused on encouraging the Philippian church.

What we see here is someone who has found true satisfaction in the midst of suffering and pain. I wish I could have the kind of satisfaction that Paul is exhibiting here. But I find myself complaining about one thing or another – usually something that is unimportant. I feel like my life has taken a turn for the worse when I get poor service at a restaurant or my car doesn't start. Paul, who is sitting in prison, seems to have another standard for satisfaction – or else he would be whining about his current circumstances, which we don't see him doing.

Paul begins by explaining his status: "If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless." He is recalling his past as a good Jewish Pharisee. He is saying that he has every reason in the world to look at his past and say, "I'm a good person." He had every reason to be content in being a good Jew and Hebrew of Hebrews. He was legalistically righteous and he even persecuted Christians which was considered a noble and righteous act under 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism.

Then in verse 7, he changes gears. We see the real point to what he is saying. He said, "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ." The MESSAGE paraphrase of that verse reads, "I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him." He traded it all in! He swapped the cheap for the priceless. His path toward KNOWING Christ involved the necessary step of forsaking and dumping what he once thought was righteousness which was merely keeping the letter of the LAW. Instead, he wants to KNOW Christ. Let's take a look at the term "KNOWING" as in verse 10, <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death."

Let's understand the term "Knowing." If someone were to ask me, "Do you know Coca Cola?", I would have to say "yes." It is my favorite softdrink and when I see the sign, I know what it means, even if it is in another language.

I know its taste. I like DIET Coke and it is distinctively different from Diet Pepsi. I even know a little of its history of how it was invented by a pharmacist in Columbus, Georgia. I know that it is produced and sold in 200 countries of the world. But there are some things I don't know. I

don't know what the ingredients are. I don't know the chemical compounds. That means that when I pop open a coke and take a drink, I don't have any idea what I'm drinking. It could be poison for all I know. I couldn't tell you what effect drinking it has on my body. So, "Do I really know Coke?"

When Paul makes the statement, "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection," I have to believe that I am a long way from knowing Christ.

If Paul, who evangelized nearly the whole of Europe all the way through Asia Minor from modern day Turkey, and whose life was so radically transformed from Pharisee to Apostle and he is now saying, "I want to know Christ." I figure there are a lot of things I have yet to experience about Christ. I think we can agree that our knowing Christ is a work in progress. It is a life-long quest to discover the nature, character, and richness of his person.

I can think of many ways we can seek him. When we set out on the adventure we call the Christian life, our whole purpose is to know and experience him. For a lot of people, they see becoming a Christian as a destination. "Well, now that I've accepted Christ, I'm IN. I'm one of the chosen. I'm going to heaven. It's covered." Remember how I was talking earlier about living a life of satisfaction? Accepting Christ, then putting your spiritual life on the shelf until a crisis comes along and you have to reach for it, is not what Paul is talking about. That doesn't bring a SATISFYING Christian life. His spiritual walk is a life-time quest. He wants to "know Christ and the power of the resurrection."

Conclusion...

Let me bring to you one more thing as we move toward the Lord's table this morning. We refer to this table and the act of taking the bread and the cup as COMMUNION. The word communion means relationship, spiritual union, or close association. It applies to how we relate to each other, but mostly it is about our abiding relationship with Christ. It is a way of celebrating what we have in Christ.

If you commune with someone and build a relationship, then you really KNOW them. This morning as we come to the table and as you reflect on Christ's body and blood, think about your relationship with Christ. His greatest desire is for us to be in communion with him. He wants us to know him. He is calling us to himself and wants to connect with each of us on a deeper level.

Are you content with a light, informal relationship, or do you want to KNOW him. As we come to the table, reflect on your relationship with him and seek to know him better.