

## **Knowing Christ – Forget the Past and Move On**

### **Philippians 3:10-14**

#### **Introduction:**

1. **Illustration:** How many people in this building have you met? Is it over ten people? But how many people in this building do you really **know**? Beyond the basic facts of who they're married to, where they live, where they work, etc?
  - There is a vast difference between **meeting** somebody and really **knowing** somebody.
2. The man who wrote this book (the apostle Paul) had met Jesus Christ as His Savior on the road to Damascus, but in verse 10 we see the cry of his heart. It was to know Christ.
3. He wasn't satisfied to have simply met Christ as His Savior, he longed to know Christ in a more intimate and personal way (illustration: blurry picture, then clear picture on screen).
4. I'm fearful that many of us have a surface relationship with our Savior, Jesus Christ (back to blurry).
  - Illustration: surface relationship - we talk about the weather, sports, etc. Is this how we are with Jesus?
5. Or do you have an on-going, personal, close, one on one communion with Christ (back to clear)? This was Paul's desire and should be our all-consuming zeal and passion.
6. Without it, your life is lacking something, but when you **do** have it, your life takes on new meaning and there is such a joy and peace in your heart. Everything else in life seems to fall into its proper place when that intimate relationship with Christ is there.
7. But what will it take to really know Christ? This text will teach us.

#### **First, it will take an understanding of the value of suffering. vs. 10-11**

#### **Second, it will take dissatisfaction with your spiritual attainment. vs. 12-13a**

1. **Illustration:** Rock climbing
  - To become a proficient rock climber, you can't be satisfied with where you are at. If so, you will never go higher up the mountain. Picture your Christian life as a mountain. We should be climbing and growing in our relationship with Christ until the day we are with Him – that is the top of the mountain. But just like the rock climber, if we are satisfied with where we are at, we'll never grow to know Christ. Once the rock climber gets to the top, then what?
  - This can happen in the Christian life too. When we feel as if we have reached the spiritual pinnacle of Christian growth, rest assured, we will never know Christ in a deeper and more intimate way.
2. Read verses 12-13a. This is a picture of a person who isn't satisfied. Paul did not feel like he had arrived and that he had no more room for spiritual growth in his life.
  - Paul desperately wanted to fulfill the mission and purpose for which he had been saved (vs. 12). "Follow after" means "to actively pursue"; apprehend (to take eagerly).

3. You will never take that next step of spiritual growth in your life until you become dissatisfied with you are right now. If you are in a spiritual rut, you have to become sick and tired of it before you will do anything about it. **cf. Proverbs 26:12**

### **Third, it will take forgetting the past. vs. 13**

1. Picture of rock climber high up.
  - If this were me and I looked down from where I came from, forget it, I'm done!
2. We will never know Christ in a greater way until we make a conscious choice to forget those things which are behind. Why is this? Because you cannot know someone in the **present** if your heart is dwelling on the **past**.
  - **Illustration:** Many married couples who live in the past. Living in the past will kill your future and make your present miserable.
3. It is the same way in our relationship with Christ. We must forget those things which are behind. Paul had experienced some very painful, hurtful, and traumatic things in his past - both before he was saved, and after he was saved.
4. But he said, "...*forgetting those things which are behind.*"
5. Forget doesn't mean that we fail to remember. We are human beings and though we wish we could erase certain bad memories, we cannot.
6. Biblically, the word "forget" means that we are no longer influenced or affected by those things. **Illustration:** Salvation - God says, "Your sins will I remember no more." This doesn't mean God has a bad memory; it simply means that God will no longer hold those sins against us. Those sins have no affect on my standing with God or His attitude towards me.
7. We cannot change the past, but we can change the **meaning** of the past. Paul had a rough past (**1 Timothy 1:12-17**). This could have weighted him down and destroyed him, but instead it became an inspiration to him. The events from Paul's past didn't change, but Paul's **understanding** of them did.
8. Too many Christians are shackled by regrets and events of the past. They are trying to run the race by looking backwards. No wonder they stumble, fall, and have trouble maintaining any spiritual consistency in their Christian life.
9. You can live in the past and always be digging up bad memories and bad events from the past if you want to, but you need to understand two things about this:
  - First, it will do nothing to change the past. It is what it is.
  - Second, it will hinder you in knowing Christ in the present. You will be miserable.

### **Fourth, it will take a determination to press forward. vs. 13-14**

1. Paul had a burning, intense desire to know Christ (vs. 10), but it didn't end there. Paul put some feet to his desires.
  - Verse 12 - "*I follow after*", verse 13 - "*reaching forth*", verse 14 - "*I press*"
2. Back to rock climber - You don't climb a mountain by listening to lectures, reading books or watching videos about rock climbing. You climb a rock by strapping on the gear and doing it!
3. How does this apply to the Christian life? There comes a point when we have to accept responsibility for our spiritual walk with Christ and we have to possess some

spiritual fortitude to make some changes and begin to really grow in our relationship with Christ.

4. We are all at different points in the spiritual growth process, but we have to grow where we are at. Paul said in verse 13, "*reaching forth*." This means "to stretch oneself."
5. In verse 14, Paul said, "I press." This carries the idea of intense endeavor. The word "mark" means "a goal." Paul had some spiritual goals that he was reaching and stretching for through the power of Christ.
6. The ultimate prize would be when Paul received the high calling or the upward, heavenly invitation into the presence of Jesus Christ. Until that day, Paul wanted to continue to know Christ in a deeper way.
7. Here is the idea: Paul wanted to live his life in a way that when he was ushered into the very presence of Christ, it would just be the next natural step in their growing relationship.

**Christian - may this will true of us!**