

## The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ Philippian 3:7-11

When Pastor Stan asked me to preach, I began to pray and ask the Lord to open up to me what text He wants me to preach on. I don't know what you as a congregation specifically need to hear at this moment... but I'm sure God does and that's why I wanted Him to just direct me to the passage He wants to preach on... And as I was praying, one of the very first texts that came to my mind was actually my favorite passage in Scripture... I love preaching through this passage. There was a time in my life when the Lord used this specific text to bring me to Himself, and even after becoming a Christian this is the passage that continues to shape my understanding of the Gospel, my understanding of what Christianity is all about.

You know we live in a time when Christianity is being advertised by many different things. Imagine an unbeliever would come up to you today and say to you—"Hey Bob, or John, so what is Christianity? What is this thing that you have dedicated all your life to?" How do you think you would respond?

I think many people would respond differently. Some people would say Christianity is happiness. Christianity is peace. it is joy... it is love.. In charismatic circles they would say Christianity is prosperity, and wealth, and health.

There are lots of ways you could answer that question, but whatever it is that pops into your head when you think about Christianity, that one thing most accurately represents the true reason of why you decided to follow Christ. That is your motivation to live as a Christian. People embrace Christ for very different reasons.

This morning we are going to ask Paul that question. We are going to ask him, "Paul what is your view of Christianity?" How do you view your Christian life? What makes you get up every morning to go out in the face of a hostile world that hates you, that rejects you, that mocks you...

When you read Paul's epistles, there are times when you just want to scream out Paul, "What in the world keeps you going man? How do you endure all this stuff? Where do you get all the motivation to endure all the suffering, all the hostility, all the persecution?"

Well, I think this morning we will get an answer to that question. This is what moved Paul in his Christian walk.

Turn with me to Philippians 3:7-11...

Now, there is no way you could miss the central focus of this passage.

Just look how many times the word Christ is repeated here. Paul lived in order to gain Christ. In order to know Him and to continue to grow in the knowledge of Him. In order to know the power of His resurrection. In order to share in His sufferings. In order to be found in His righteousness.

Paul wanted Christ not for the sake of the byproducts of faith in Christ. Love, joy, peace, and salvation from hell, that's all great and those are great benefits of being truly saved. But let us never miss the main point of Christianity—Paul wanted Christ for the sake of Christ. He came to love Christ so much, that in the view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ, he saw everything as pure garbage. As completely worthless.

Martyn Lloyd Jones once referred to this passage as “one of the most eloquent statements of what it means to be a Christian.”

And that is exactly what we will try to do this morning. Looking at verses 7–8, we will define biblical Christianity.

In this passage we will find three main facets of true, saving, genuine faith.

And this is an hour sermon that I had to condense into 35 minutes, so we will not dwell on each of these as much as we would like to, but I trust that these three points will give you something to think and pray about, as you go on into this world to live as a person who bears the name of Christ.

First of all, I want to quickly look at the context.

In Philippians 3, Paul warns the church at Philippi against a group of first century heretics who are often referred to as Judaizers. These were people who were trying to Judaize Christ followers, meaning that they attempted to force the Jewish law on Christians.

Now these people distorted the Gospel on the most foundational level, because they taught that Christ's work on earth was not enough to earn our salvation. They taught that salvation comes through Christ *plus* one's obedience to the law.

This was a huge problem in the first century. Most of the church was persecuted not by the ungodly pagans or Roman government, but most of all by the religious Jews who could never come to terms with pure teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, where a man is saved not on the basis of works, but on the basis of his faith.

And in the beginning verses of chapter 3 Paul warns the Philippians to beware of these “dogs”. He tells them to beware of their false circumcision, he calls them evil workers... and then he does something very interesting.

The reason why these Judaizers compelled people to keep the Mosaic Law was because they wanted to glory in their own flesh. Paul says it explicitly in Galatians 6:12.

Galatians 6:12 “Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ.”

And then beginning with verses 3–4, Paul says that true believers are those who boast not in their own accomplishments, they are people who put no confidence in the flesh, but those who glory in Christ and what He has done.

And then in verse 4 Paul challenges these heretics, and he says that the reason why he chooses to boast only in Christ was not because he has nothing to boast about in himself, according to human standards.. In fact he says, I have way more accomplishments, I have way more human achievements that I can put my confidence in than any of you. And then he lists 7 religious advantages that Paul himself trusted in before he was converted to Christ.

1. He was circumcised on the eighth day. Paul used to trust in his religious ritualism.
2. He was a real Jew, of the nation of Israel. He is not a proselyte—a gentile converted into Judaism, like many Judaizers were. Paul used to trust in his heritage.
3. He was able to track down his heritage to a specific tribe of Benjamin—he knew his roots very well. Some people say that the tribe of Benjamin was the most highly regarded tribe at that time. If that is so, Paul trusted in his high social status.
4. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews, meaning that his parents kept all the Jewish traditions very faithfully and did not give in under the pagan Greco–Roman influences. Paul trusted in his religious traditions.
5. With respect to the Law, Paul says he was a Pharisee. And Acts 26 says he was part of the strictest sect in his religion. Paul trusted in this religious devotion.
6. He was so zealous that he killed Christians. He trusted in his religious sincerity.
7. Finally, Paul says “as to the righteousness which is in the Law” he was found blameless. And so Paul trusted in his own self-righteousness.

Here is a picture of Paul before conversion. This was his confidence in his flesh, when his understanding of salvation was as perverted as his current Judaizer opponents. This was his old life.

But starting with verse 7, Paul begins to talk about his new life after conversion. He contrasts his new origin of confidence with the old, and here we find the first facet of saving faith.

### #1. RENUNCIATION

I call it the RENUNCIATION.

It is a rejection of all self-confidence that he just presented in verses 4–6.

3:7 “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”

Paul uses very interesting terminology here.

He uses the language of accounting here. He pictures himself as an accountant.

I think most of you play a role of an accountant in your family at least once a month, when you have to create a budget of some sort, and most of the time, the way we make that budget is by creating two columns of pluses and minuses. In one column we list our income, all the pluses onto our account, and in the other column we have the minuses, all the expenses.

Well Paul brings up that picture here. Here's what he says, "In my past, as I reflected on all my human achievements, all my ritualism, and social standing, and heritage, and traditionalism, and my devotion, and my zeal, and my self-righteousness, you know what I saw next to them? I saw pluses. I saw big fat pluses.

"These things were all in the assets column. And as I reflected on the day when I'd stand before the judgment throne of the God of Israel, my heart rested in the fact that I'll be able to present all these assets to God and He would let me into His Kingdom, based on all these big pluses that added me self-worth and self-confidence." That is essentially what he is saying—he calls all these things gain. Profit.

But then here's what he says, "Whatever things were gain to me, I now (after I met Christ), realize that they actually were losses. All that long list of assets that I spend all of my life contemplating and firmly believing that they were bringing me more confidence in my eternal salvation." He says, "I now realize that all these things actually did the exact opposite, they were minuses! These things were actually robbing me of true salvation in Jesus Christ, because Jesus says that unless one comes to Him completely bankrupt, unless one is completely poor in spirit, and fully rejects all attempts to be justified by his own works, by his own achievements, such a man can never receive the salvation of his soul.

And so Paul says here that there was a time when I saw how all my attempts to be justified by my self-righteousness were actually dragging me down into the pits hell.

Let me give you an illustration of this Greek word for "loss."

Acts 27. You guys remember the shipwreck that Paul has suffered on his way to Rome. There was a great storm that arose at the sea and in Acts 27:10 Paul stood up and said the following, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."

Then Luke says that the storm they encountered was so strong that they began to throw their cargo over board because they had to lighten the ship, in order to save the ship from getting fully destroyed.

Now, since this was a cargo ship, these people were on the way to Rome as merchants to sell products and make a profit. Those were very valuable assets that people were trying to get to Rome.

But you know when the storm hit, and these men realized that these valuable assets are standing between them and life, all of the sudden these things became worthless to them.

Friends, there was a time when these merchants considered all that cargo as valuable assets that they thought will bring them gain, profit, when they would come to Rome. But as soon as they realized that their life is at stake... That if they continue to hold on to that cargo, it will cost them their life, not only did they count that cargo as worthless, but they count it as loss—as something that is actually harmful to them. It is dragging them down. It is pulling them down into the sea. And if they don't get rid of it, they are going to die, and they will suffer a shipwreck.

Friends, that is a perfect picture of what happens during salvation.

If you are sitting here today and you think that when you stand before the almighty God one day, you will bring out your list of your self-righteous acts and human achievements and shove it in God's face and hope that on the basis of that you will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Friend, if that is you, I can assure you that not only will that list have nothing to do with God's acceptance of you into heaven, but that list will actually be the basis for your own condemnation! It will drag you down!

That list will be used against you at the judgement day because you just tried to be justified by your self-righteous works before the Holy God. And by that you brought God down to the level of your filthy rags and you have attempted to bring yourself up to the level of God's perfect righteousness.

The only way a person can make it to heaven, is by being perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. Matthew 5 is clear on that. And if you are a hair short of that standard of righteousness, you will go to hell for falling short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). That is what the Scripture teaches.

The only way for us to gain acceptance before the Father is to be credited God's own righteousness to us. And the Bible says we gain that righteousness by faith. That is exactly what Paul says later in verse 9 "...now I want to be found in Him not with my righteousness derived from the law, but that which comes from God, on the basis of faith." That is the Gospel, friends.

That is the first facet of true, saving, genuine faith—we must forsake all and every attempt to be justified by anything of our own, and fully trust in the work of Christ for our salvation.

## #2. PERSEVERENCE.

There's a second facet of saving faith in verses 7–8, and I call it "perseverance."

Now, going back to our analogy of Acts 27, where those merchants were forced to get rid of their cargo to save their lives, imagine those merchants getting safely to the shore, after the storm has calmed down, and imagine them sitting on the beach, gazing into the horizon and with tears in their eyes as they mourn the loss of their cargo. And they are crying out, "All our stuff, all that money we invested is now long gone."

Imagine these people can't come to terms with the reality that all that cargo, all the money that they invested, it is never to come back again... And they are just sitting there mourning their loss...

Now, have you guys ever met Christians that act this way whenever they contemplate their life before conversion? Can you imagine a missionary who is serving somewhere in Africa, and he hates his life, he hates the circumstances, and every evening he looks through the pictures of his beautiful home that he sold in America, and the luxury car he had, and the beautiful church, and he is mourning the fact that Christ made him give all that up for the sake of missions...

I've never seen that. Most of the missionaries I talk to are full of joy and they have no regrets about the choices they've made. They are excited about the fact that they could suffer loss in their life for the sake of doing God's work, because God's work is precious to them.

Now, what about Paul?

Someone may say, "Well of course, imagine the road to Damascus. Imagine the horrifying emotional experience that Paul went through! I mean blazing light from the sky. Voices from heaven. Physical blindness. I mean who wouldn't repent? That would put anyone in a position to make hasty decisions for the Lord! He had no choice! Certainly, Paul must have regretted his choices in the past when he realized he had to give up so many things when he ended up a missionary?"

Well, actually that is a complete opposite of what Paul is saying here in verse 8.

Paul writes this epistle 30 years after his conversion. 30 years have passed after the road to Damascus. And you know what he says? He says "not only have I counted everything as loss (past tense), but I continue to count everything as loss." In verse 8 Paul switches to a present tense verb in order to show that he has absolutely no regrets. And the 30 years of his Christian walk have not diminished his high view of Christ, they only intensified it by many many times...

Look what he says in verse 8, "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

What is Paul talking about here? What exactly are these "all things"? I mean it is clear that in verse 7, he refers to everything that he listed for us in verses 4-6, but in verse 8 he shifts our focus from his past conversion to his day-day experience. To the present tense.

There were lots of things Paul had to sacrifice for the sake of Christ.

Paul had lots of things to enjoy in life before his conversion. We must remember the exalted position he had in Judaism. He was a very well-known, very respected man. He was a very educated man, with a great career ahead of him. Apparently, Paul came from a rich family, because he possessed Roman citizenship and he says he was born in it, which means his father was a Roman citizen which costs lots of money. Paul had a secured future ahead of him. Paul lived a pretty comfortable lifestyle for his day.

But when Paul beheld the glory of Christ on that road to Damascus, not only did he forsake his Jewish theology, with that he abandoned all the privileges he enjoyed as a prominent religious member of the Jewish society.

And here's what Paul traded his life for:

1 Corinthians 4:9-13 says that because we have become a spectacle to the world we are fools for Christ's sake. We are weak. To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; we are reviled... We are persecuted. We are slandered, we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things.

This is the life of Paul. And he says "I don't regret a bit of it. It is so worth it. I continue to count all the things I've lost as garbage, as rubbish, because I know my purpose in life, and I know where I'm going after this."

Friends, do you show the world that Christ is more satisfying and more precious than anything this world has to offer?

Are we, like Paul, prepared to count money as loss, to count possessions as loss, to count reputation as loss, to count comfort as loss, to count an easy, conflict-free life as loss—all for the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus our Lord?

Is Christ of such value to you—has He captivated your heart to such an extent—that you're prepared to lose everything this life has to offer because of your commitment to Him, and call that loss gain?

That is the second such important facet of true, genuine, saving faith.

### #3. MOTIVATION

Now, finally here's the last thing I want us to focus on. The third fact of saving faith, is the right motivation. This is what kept Paul going. This is the backdrop that put all other things as garbage in comparison.

Verse 8 "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ..."

Paul says that a deeper and more intimate knowledge of Christ is what moves him to renounce all things as loss.

Now, some of us might see Paul as some kind of a spiritual super hero who probably had no room to grow in his relationship with the Lord, but Paul says later in this chapter that he doesn't consider himself as having laid hold of it yet, the goal, but all his life he is forgetting what lies behind and he reaches forward to what lies ahead, he says, "I press on toward the goal—the goal of knowing Christ more deeply, more intimately."

Now what does that mean? We don't want to just speak in abstract phrases here.

Knowing Christ does not mean taking a class on Christology. It does not mean knowing more about Christ, although that is a big part of it—you have to know who Christ is, and you have to know His character and His nature—all that is very important. But Paul says something different here. The verb “to know” is used in several different senses in the Bible.

This verb is used to describe a close intimate relationship between a husband and wife. We read that Adam knew his wife and they had a son. This is the verb that God uses to describe His relationship with Israel. Jesus uses this verb to speak of His relationship with His sheep—in John 10 He says “I know my sheep and they know me, even as the Father knows me, and I know the Father.” There's a mutual intimate relationship.

Knowing Christ means being united with Him. It means walking day-to-day life in hand with Him.

Paul's talking about experiential knowledge. It's when our hearts worship a real person, not an idea, or an image on the wall. It's when we know that Jesus is not just a savior, He is my savior... He is not just a friend, He is my friend... He is my comforter... He is my advocate... My brother... My intercessor...

Friend, do you know Christ like that?

Simply put, I'm sure you can think of many people whom you know about but you never met them personally. And then once you do meet them, you get to know them more and more the rest of your life. Those who are married know what I'm talking about.

That is exactly what happens in our relationship with Christ. We get to know Him more and more as we renounce all the things that get in the way between us and Him. And the moment we stop renouncing... The moment Christ becomes less attractive to us and we begin to count something as more precious than Christ, our knowledge of Him fades away... Our sanctification process is put on hold. We suffer loss of joy, we suffer lack of peace... The Father lovingly disciplines us...

But friends, that deeper knowledge of Christ is a very exciting journey if we cultivate a heart set on Him. It was a journey that fascinated Paul's heart so much that he was able to let go of the things he held onto for so many years, in order to gain Christ.

## CONCLUSION

We are going to pray right now and the question I want to leave you with is “do you know Him?” Not just facts about Him. Not just facts about the Gospel and what He did on the cross, or about His resurrection or ascension. But do you know Him? Do you know Him like you know

your spouse? Do you know him like you know your kids or your parents? Do you cultivate a deep, lasting communion with Him throughout your day?

If you can answer yes to these questions, my prayer for you is that you would continue to feast the appetite of your souls on this glorious Christ. Arrange your life in such a way that this knowledge of Christ would never stop.

And if you don't know Him yet, the Bible says that Christ is calling everyone to Himself and He is offering you a chance to have this priceless treasure of knowing Christ. Who would ever stumble upon a treasure chest and do nothing to lay hold of it?

Lay hold of Christ this morning, repent from your sin and follow Christ in faith and the Bible says you will have eternal life.

## "THE SURPASSING VALUE OF KNOWING CHRIST"

Philippians 3:7-8

**Main Idea:** Many people have erroneous perceptions of what Christianity is all about. In this text Paul gives us three facets of a true, saving, and genuine faith that must govern every Christian's life.

### **The Context of Philippians 3:**

What was the problem in Philippi that triggered Paul to write these verses?

What were the seven religious advantages that Paul put his trust in before he met Christ?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

### **Sermon Outline:**

#### 1. Renunciation (v. 7)

What must every person renounce in order to become a true Christian?

#### 2. Perseverance (v. 8a)

What was one thing that Paul continued to do, even after 30 years of following Christ?

#### 3. Motivation (v. 8b)

What must our motivation be for Christian living?