



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Philippians 3: 9-11

2013

"Knowing Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Mark, and good morning. We are back in the Book of Philippians, Philippians chapter 3, verses 9, 10, and 11. I'm going to begin reading with verse 8. We ended our study two weeks ago with verse 8 but I'm going to pick up with verse 8 because it's connected to verse 9; it's the beginning of the sentence. So, we begin with verse 8, where Paul writes,

<sup>8</sup> More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, <sup>9</sup> and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, <sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; <sup>11</sup> in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3: 8-11

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we give You thanks for this time together, this opportunity for us to gather and fellowship together as Your people. What a privilege that is, what a blessing it is. It's certainly a blessing to gather with Your people around Your Word, and we thank You for this great Word of God, all 66 books of the Bible, which are Your inerrant Word. It's Your revelation to us. And we learn in this particular verse, this particular passage about the importance of *knowing* Christ. That was Paul's great ambition. May it be ours, LORD.

I pray that as we spend time together considering these three verses that are verses that focus very specifically on three great doctrines of the Christian faith, that You would instill with us confidence before You, the joy of our salvation, and the great appreciation we should have for our Savior who has gained it all for us. Paul certainly understood that. And the love that he had for Christ and for the Triune God, gave him the great ambition of his life and the great interest of his life: To know Him, to *know* God: To *know* Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, and in so doing, *know* the Triune God. May that be our great desire and ambition of our lives. And we know that, should it be, it will affect all of our conduct, all of our lives, and You'll bless us greatly.

Father, we do pray for Your blessings. We pray for Your spiritual blessings on us in this hour. We pray for Your material blessings as well. We need that. We are physical people, we exist in a physical world and we're dependent upon You for the provisions of that world. And so we pray, LORD, that You would bless, that You would give the material things that we need. For those who lack employment, we pray that You would provide it. And for those who have it, we thank You for the employment that You've given; and may we work diligently in the jobs that we have, that we would serve You, and work as unto You.

LORD, we come to a text that really does promise us the ability to have all of that. We have the power of God—resurrection power within us. May we all experience that. We will experience that the more we know You, the more we grow in our relationship with You. So we pray that that will be the outcome of our time together this morning.

Bless us as we sing our next hymn, and bless our special music. May all of it be preparation of our hearts for a time of study and worship together. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* Oftentimes in the Bible, minor characters are some of the most interesting. Ittai the Gittite is one. He was a Gentile. He was a Philistine convert who was devoted to David—which says a lot about David; he attracted such people. And Hittite and the Philistine warriors who changed their allegiance and who became men of faith says everything about them—they were true believers in the LORD.

Ittai was one of them. When rebellion shook the kingdom, and all Israel followed the rebel Absalom, Ittai joined David when he was fleeing for his life; when he was weak, when he was on the run. David tried to discourage him, 'Return to your home', he told him, 'this isn't your fight.' But he wouldn't. In 2 Samuel chapter 15, in verse 21, Ittai said, "As the LORD lives, and as my lord the king lives, surely wherever my lord the king may be, whether for death or for life, there also your servant will be."

He risked everything. He risked his possessions. He risked his life for David. Why would he do that? Why would a foreigner be so devoted to the king of Israel? Well, I think it's very simple—he loved him. So he wanted to be with him wherever he was, even in exile and hardship. Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon on that text, on Ittai and his faithfulness. He titled it, *"Loyal To The Core"*.

Well that's the same description that can be given of the apostle Paul. His great desire in life was to be with Christ. His great desire in life was to know Him and experience His life—experience even His sufferings. That's what he says in Philippians chapter 3, verse 10.

That was Paul's great ambition in life. And Paul was an ambitious man. He reveals that about himself in what can be described as brief biography in Philippians 3, where he lets us know what was really important to him—what was actually of vital importance to him.

His life divides into two parts: His life in Judaism and his life in Christ. His life in Judaism was a life wholly devoted to the Law. He became a Pharisee. He studied the Law and the traditions of the Jews and he did so with the great ambition to achieve a righteousness of his own doing, a righteousness in his own strength with complete confidence in the flesh and with complete confidence in his own ability.

But that all changed when he met Christ on the Damascus road. That's when Paul saw himself as he really was—not as a righteous man at all, but as a sinner. Suddenly, he says, everything that he had thought was gain in his life, (his heritage as a pure Jew, his personal achievements in the Law), all of that he came to realize was nothing but loss. It did nothing to gain God's approval. In fact, in the words of Isaiah, all of his righteous deeds were "as filthy rags." (Is 64:6).

That's when he turned from self and self-confidence in the flesh in his own ability, to confidence in Christ and trusted in Him for salvation. He now develops that in verses 9 through 11. He describes this change in his experience in three aspects of salvation: The past act of salvation, the present activity of salvation, and the future goal of salvation. Or we can put it this way; in verse 9, we have *justification*, in verse 10, we have *sanctification*, and in verse 11, *glorification*. In all of that are three great doctrines in three short verses.

And at the center of all of this was Paul's personal pursuit of his great goal in life, which was to 'know Christ.' Nothing was more important to him than that. He said in verse 8, that he considered everything that he had gained in Judaism loss, "*rubbish*", for the blessing of gaining Christ as his Lord: Which means gaining Him not simply as his master, but as his God and Savior.

He knew who Christ was. No mere man, He's the Lord. He's the one who reigns over the earth and Paul's great God and Savior. And he wanted to know Him, know Him better. 'Better', Paul would say, 'to have Christ and nothing, than keep everything that he had gained under the Law without Christ.'

So, 'he gave it all up', he says in verse 9, so that he 'could be found in Christ', could be joined to Jesus in a personal, vital, life changing relationship. And there he says,

it would be clear that his acceptability with God was not because of his own righteousness, (which he achieved, achieved by Law keeping), but because of the righteousness which is received and which comes from God.

Now, this is one of Paul's favorite subjects, *righteousness*. And it's one of the most important subjects in the Bible. It's all about *justification*. Justification is a word that comes out of the law courts. In Deuteronomy chapter 25, in verse 1, Moses instructed the judges of Israel to "justify the innocent and condemn the guilty." That tells us what justification means. Justification isn't making righteous—it's declaring righteousness. It's declaring the innocent to be what they are—and to declare the guilty to be what they are. That's what a judge was to do.

He doesn't make one to be one or the other; he simply recognizes it. He finds the innocent to be innocent; and he finds the guilty to be guilty. And that's what Moses is telling the judges to do. Be good judges. Justify the innocent. Declare them to be what they are, innocent.

And frequently, when Paul uses the word *righteousness*, he uses it with that meaning—that *legal* meaning. Not 'doing righteousness', not achieving it through the things that we do, not acting in righteousness, but '*having* righteousness', or 'having a right standing with the law'. That's its meaning here. It has the idea of being acquitted in court, of being declared not guilty by the judge.

And it is a free *gift* of grace because in terms of our justification, the righteousness that we have in salvation is a free gift— because we *are* guilty. We're not innocent. Paul indicates the freeness of it when he says, '...not a righteousness derived from the Law', but that which is "through faith in Christ." (vs9). We have this right standing, we have this position of innocence. And not only a position of innocence, but of actual, positive righteousness through faith—not works. We don't earn it by the things we do. We don't earn it, as I said earlier, by Law keeping. We receive it by faith in Christ.

Now, when I say, 'our righteousness is a free gift', I mean it is free to us; it was not free to God. It cost Him a lot—it cost Him the infinite price of His own Son. He can declare us righteous. He can declare us forgiven, because we are. And we are because of the price that Christ paid; for He paid it all. He paid the full penalty of our sins in His death.

If we want to think of sin in terms of debt, the debt we owe to God, which is an infinite debt, He, in His infinite person as the God-man, paid that debt for us when He died in our place. And then, by His perfect life, He established the positive righteousness of full obedience to the Law.

And all of that is ours at the moment of faith. It's ours instantly and forever at the moment of faith. We are declared righteous by God; we're declared '*right*' before the Law; He considers us to be innocent, because of what His Son did—and that's forever. We can never become more innocent than we are. We can never become more righteous than Christ is. That's what He gained for us. And so it's free, and we have it at the moment of faith, and faith alone.

And what is *faith*? Well, faith is simply *trust*. It's putting our confidence in Christ. It's believing in Him as the one who saves. And to stress that, 'Faith is the only way to receive forgiveness and obtain righteousness', Paul says this: he says that, 'This righteousness comes from God on the basis of faith.' (vs9c). That's the Gospel. We do nothing to earn our salvation; we do nothing to secure it for ourselves. God has done it all in Jesus Christ. Christ is our Savior and we *receive* what He's done for us. We receive it by faith, as by an open hand that's simply receives a gift. That's faith.

And the gift is everything: Eternal life; right standing with God; we escape the judgment to come; we have heaven forever; we have the resurrection to come; we have the new heavens and the new earth to come. —We have *everything* because of what He's done.

Now Paul understood that. He understood everything that he had done was loss, it was "rubbish", it was refuse. And everything he had now was due to the person and

work of Christ who set His love on Paul, (and all of His elect from all eternity), and came and died for them, suffered the pains of hell in their place.

And that truth moved Paul greatly. It filled him with love for Christ, so much so that, more than anything else in this life, he wanted to *know* Christ, and *know* Him better. And so, in verse 10, he states his goal in life, which is to do just that, to know Christ.

Now, you look at the verse, it's not 'to know about Him', but to "*know* Him", know Him personally. He wants a growing relationship with Jesus Christ who died for him— which indicates that He's no longer dead; that the One who died for him is alive and he wanted to have a relationship with Him.

We don't have relationships with those who have died and have gone on—who are no longer here. Christ was dead—but He's no longer dead. He was raised from the dead, which is to say, as we said last week, and as we should say every Sunday, and as we should say every day of our lives, 'We have a living Savior.' And He's with us daily. He's with us constantly, (Not in the sense that we sometimes speak, sort of sentimentally, about 'So-and-so is always with us.' When they're gone they're not with us, really.)

But Christ is really with us. He's alive. He's been raised from the dead—and He's infinite. He's with us in the Holy Spirit and He promises to be with us wherever we are, wherever we go, whatever we do. That's how Matthew ended his great Gospel: with Jesus sending the disciples out into the world, to "make disciples...baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." And then He gave that great promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (vs19-20). Or 'I am with you men, always. And I'm with those who come after you—and those who come after them.' He's with us, and He'll be with His people to the end of the age.

Now that means He's with us now. We read the Book of Revelation: In those first chapters, Jesus speaks of being among the "candlesticks"; He's among the churches.

He's there, spiritually, but really there. And He's really here. And He's with us wherever we go.

And Paul was very much aware of that. He had met Him at midday on the Damascus road, saw Him in His glory, listened to Him as He spoke. —He knew that He was alive. He knew Him—and his goal was to know Him even better.

And that's to be the goal of each and every one of us. In fact, that's really what eternal life is; that's what it is basically. When we think of eternal life, we think of life that never ends—and it is that. We think of life in heaven; we think of the resurrection; we think of the kingdom to come; we think of the new heavens and the new earth. We think of all of that; we think of that existence that is glorious and without end—and it's that, certainly.

But fundamentally it's simply a relationship with God. That's how Jesus defines it in His high priestly prayer in John 17, in verse 3, where He defines *eternal life* as 'Knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He sent.'

And so Paul's ambition should be our ambition. Christ has saved us for fellowship, for our relationship. And we're to desire that above all else. Desiring that above all else makes sense.

Look, *things* are nice, *possessions* are good, but in a materialistic age we tend to think that they are 'the best'; that the best thing that we can do, (and really our ambition in life), ought to be to accumulate those *things*: Accumulate money, cars, houses, vacations.

As I said, those things are good and those things are nice; but really, relationships are better than *things*. A house is empty without a wife and children. Possessions are fine, but they are kind of meaningless without friends to share them with.

And we have the greatest relationship. Look, we *know* God! We know the Triune God. We know God Almighty. And knowing Him is to be our ambition.



Now, of course, to do that, to know Him, you have to know about Him. It's foolish to talk about knowing a person without knowing about the person. And you want to know about someone. You want to learn about them, and learn about their past, their present, what their goals are. You want to know them personally. You talk to them, and the more you do, the more you like them, the more you learn about them.

And so, knowing Christ is no different. It involves learning about Him—which means study, serious study of the Bible. It involves being taught, as you are at this moment. It means having fellowship with one another, as you do on a Sunday morning, but hopefully as you also do throughout the week. Fellowshiping with the saints, attending church, coming to the Lord's Supper. That's where He joins us and we have a special time of worship of Him in remembering who He is and what He's done for us. [Listen, that's a very important thing; it's not an option. Christians need to be observing the Lord's table, the Lord's Supper, and reflecting upon Him and what He's done for us. That's what He's asked us to do. That's fellowship.] All this is involved in getting to know Him.

No one was more faithful in all of that; no one applied himself to learning about the Savior, learning the great doctrines of the faith, developing them, and teaching others about them than the apostle Paul. And the more he knew about Christ, the more he wanted to know about Christ—and the more he came to know about Christ. Nothing was more important to him. And I would say this as well: 'Nothing is more important to Christ than for Paul to know Him—or for you and for me to know the Lord Jesus Christ.' That's what He wants.

That's illustrated, I think, in a passage and it's very well known to all of us. Luke chapter 10, when Jesus visits the home of Lazarus. You know the story well. Lazarus had two sisters, Mary and Martha—and Martha was a worker. She rushed around the house trying to get the meal together, and Luke writes, She "was distracted with all her preparations." (vs40). Mary, on the other hand, was no help at all. Martha went into the

kitchen, Mary went into the room where Jesus had sat down and was teaching—and there she sat down at His feet.

Now, as you picture the scene, your heart goes out to Martha. Mine does; it doesn't seem fair. Doesn't seem fair to any of them. It certainly didn't seem fair to Martha that her sister would not be helping her and expediting the whole process in getting things done. She's in there enjoying Jesus. So, you know the story, Martha complains, but Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;" ('but only a few things are necessary, really only one'), "for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken from her." (vs41-42).

Now you think Jesus is saying, 'No, she's going to stay here because this is where she should be. This is what's really important, sitting at the feet of the Savior, and learning from Him, and learning about Him, and getting to know Him. The one thing that's necessary is that. And Mary had chosen it.'

Now we all know that life's very real; it has very real responsibilities and we can't escape those. We shouldn't escape those. We have to earn a living. If you're a student you have to go to school, you have to study, you have to apply yourself to math and chemistry or whatever you're studying. Parents have to take care of children, and take care of the house.

There're lots and lots of responsibilities, but what's needed in all of that is a sense of proportion, some perspective. It's easy to get distracted by the chores of life. It's even easy to get distracted, (and I'm speaking for myself), it's easy to get distracted by the service of the LORD. A person in my position can get distracted by preparing sermons, and lessons, and doing visitations, things like that, and neglect time in prayer and personal study—and simply reflecting upon who the Savior is.

It's very easy to get distracted. What the Lord wants us to do is certainly to be good workmen in what we've been called to do, to be diligent in whatever field we are in. But what He really desires above all else, above Christian service itself, above teaching lessons and preaching sermons, and doing evangelism—above all of that is

simply knowing Him, learning about Him, getting to know Him. That desire pleases the Lord.

It was the heart of the psalmist. This isn't just a New Testament disposition, it's the disposition of the Old Testament saints as well. The psalmist wrote in Psalms 42, "As the deer pants for the water brook, so my soul pants for You, O God." (vs1). So did Paul's; he longed to know Christ. 'It is in Christ,' he says in Colossians chapter 2, verse 3, 'that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.'

What a simple statement, but what an unfathomable statement that is: 'In Christ are all the hidden treasures, wisdom and knowledge.' It's there in Him. We look for it everywhere in this world: in the university, in the books we study, in the treasures we try to accumulate through our work and labor, (and again, I'm not speaking against any of that), but if you really want treasure, it's in Christ. It's found in Him. We have Him, as believers. And we're in Him, as believers.

But we need to plumb the depths of that rich reserve that we'll never come to the end of. That's what Paul wanted. That's what Paul was doing. He wanted to know Him. He wanted to be like Him. That's what we do, isn't it, when we admire someone, we want to be like that person. We not only want to know them, we want to emulate them. That's true of people of all ages.

You look at young boys and think about some of you young men when you were young, what did you want to do? You wanted to be able to swing the bat like your favorite ball player. When I was young, it was Mickey Mantle. I wanted to catch the ball like Willie Mays, (which only Willie Mays could do). But those are the kind of things you want to emulate—your heroes.

Well Paul, you read his writings and you can see he really knew about athletics; he knew about sport. But athletes weren't his heroes. They weren't the ones he was trying to emulate. It was Christ, the one whom he describes in Titus chapter 2, in verse 13, as "our great God and Savior." All of that's contained in the statement that he made about Jesus being Lord. He wanted to be like Him. He wanted to experience His life, His

resurrection life, "...that I may know Him", he says, "and the power of His resurrection...", (vs10a).

Well, isn't he going to experience that? Yes, he'll talk about that. That's his hope. That's your hope, that's my hope. But he's not saying, 'I want to experience that in the future.'; he'll speak about that in the next verse. Now he's saying, 'I want to experience that right now.' That's the Christian life. The Christian life is not some moribund life, it's not some life of the mind only—it's life in experience. It is power that is in us—and it is the greatest power there is.

*Dunamis* is the Greek word that's used here, the Greek word for *power*. It's from *dunamis* that we get words like *dynamic*, and *dynamite*. Bible teachers like to illustrate the greatness of this resurrection power that we presently have by saying things like, "It's the dynamite that destroys sin and makes room for personal holiness." That's William Hendriksen's statement.

Well obviously Paul's not thinking about dynamite. But he's thinking about a force that is as great, or really greater than that, far greater than that, because this force does something that no other force in the world can do. This force breaks the power of sin. It liberates from the old habits of life that enslave us and it transforms our lives from bad to good.

It takes the power of God to do that. We can't produce that ourselves. We can't produce that naturally. The power of sin is too great—and that power is still within our lives. Paul speaks of that in Romans 7, (verse 19), in that dilemma that he faced, "For the good that I wish, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not wish." That's every Christian's experience.

But Christ, who conquered sin on the cross and was raised from the dead, enables us to do that. He will enable us to rise someday, but in the meantime, He enables us to conquer the sin that's in us, and guarantees us ultimate victory.

Now this must have been, I would imagine, must have been especially meaningful to the Philippians, because they knew power. Philippi was a very Roman

town, a military outpost. And Rome was the very embodiment of power; the Roman army had conquered the world. Paul was reminded of Rome's power every day: He was chained to a Roman soldier; he was a prisoner in a Roman jail; he was waiting for Roman justice.

And yet Paul writes to this small group of Christians in Philippi, and he says that 'The real power in this world is not found in Rome, it's not in Caesar or his legions, it's in Christ—and He is in us.' 'We have the power,' he was saying, 'and I want to experience that power in a changed life that triumphs over sin, a godly and bold life that stands firm for Christ in the midst of this world, against all that this world is for. That's what I seek in life.' That's what Paul was saying—and that's what we're to seek.

David told Solomon, "Know the God of your father...If you seek Him, He will let you find Him..." (1Ch 28:9). And if we seek Him, we will find Him. He'll let us find Him, and He'll let us find all that wisdom and knowledge and power, that great treasure that's hidden in Christ. And we'll have more and more of that: That gives new life, that transforms our life, that can give order to a troubled marriage, that can give order to a disorderly life, that can change us. That's the promise. So Paul sought Christ because he wanted to know Him and experience His power.

And he says he wanted to know "the fellowship of the sufferings." (vs10b). We wouldn't have expected that. But there's a logic to that because the more we are like Christ, the more we are transformed by His power—well then, the more we're going to repeat His experiences in life. And Paul wanted to experience that.

He was a bit like Ittai in that regard. Ittai wanted to be with David. And if David was in exile, Ittai wanted to be there with David; if David was going to battle, Ittai wanted to be in the front lines with David; and if David was going to die, Ittai wanted to die with him. And Jesus is in effect, 'exiled from the earth', so to speak. 'He has gone outside the city', the author of Hebrews tells us, (Heb 13:13), and 'we're to follow Him out there, in exile with Him, to live His life.'

Paul wished to do that: To be so identified with Christ, to represent Him so closely that he suffered the same reproach from the world, the same persecution, the

same difficulties due to righteousness: The imputed righteousness but also the righteousness of obedience because obedience is involved in all of this. We don't simply learn and not live. We learn to live, to live obediently. Faith produces obedience. It did in the apostles; and because of that, they suffered. That's part of it.

In Acts chapter 5, we have an example of that. The initial reaction is stated there, given there, against the success of the Gospel in Jerusalem. It was spreading through the city like wildfire. Thousands of Jewish people were coming to faith in Jesus Christ and it disturbed, very much, the authorities—and they needed to put a stop to it.

And so, they did so, (or they tried to do so), by arresting the leaders of the church. They arrested Peter and John, there in the temple where they were preaching. They were warned not to do it again. They were then flogged. They were beaten, and then warned again before being released. But Luke writes, "They went on their way... rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name...And continued preaching Jesus as the Christ." (vs41-42). It didn't stop them—and they rejoiced in the suffering. That's what Paul was talking about.

Now, I don't want to be glib about a subject like suffering; it's not easy. In fact, Paul had to encourage Timothy about that. Timothy was timid and Timothy was shying away from the dangers of the ministry and the danger of being a witness for Christ. And so Paul had to remind him, (it was some of the last statements that he makes publicly, or at least in letter to his young friend), in 2 Timothy 3, he said, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (vs12). We're going to suffer for righteousness.

But Paul was ready for that. He even longed to suffer with the sufferings of Christ—and there may be something else involved in that. It may also refer to the sufferings that come from this sinful world in which we live. That is, the affliction that sin brings to the soul of a changed man or woman. As a righteous person we're affected by it. We're not in agreement with it.; it is disturbing to us. It afflicts us. It grieves us. It did

the Lord Jesus Christ. It did Paul when he was in Athens and he saw all the idols; it disturbed him greatly. And that may be also what he's praying for here: That he won't be satisfied with sin; that he will be grieved by sin and long for righteousness. (And the ugliness of sin should disturb us as well.)

So Paul says that he wants to be "conformed to His death." (vs10c). He means by that, that he wants the effects, the blessings of Christ's death for him, to become an increasing reality—a daily reality in him. Paul does this in Galatians 2:20 saying that he'd "been crucified with Christ." —so it had happened. He had died with Christ. All believers have been crucified with Christ; and that means the old man is dead—we're not the person we used to be.

We died to sin. And Paul says, in Romans 6, verse 11, that we have been made "alive to God in Christ." We're new people. A key to the Christian life is recognizing that: 'Recognizing that we're "dead to sin", we're "alive to God in Christ Jesus"—and living that way!

To live that way we have to recognize that about ourselves; we have to recognize who we are in Christ, that we're a new creation, and that we have been forgiven completely. That's justification. Can't be more forgiven than you are. If you're a believer in Christ, you are absolutely accepted by God, now and forever. You can't lose that. You can never be unaccepted by God, and you can never achieve more acceptability than you have with Him. You are fully and completely accepted in Christ. That's justification.

So we need to understand that: Understand our position with Him, and that we have, with this new position, new power to actually live obedient lives and overcome sin—and live lives that are pleasing to Him. We're to be living like that. That's how Paul wanted to live. That's what's involved in knowing Christ. It is a life transforming relationship.

But the complete transformation is still future—with the resurrection when both sin and its effects will be forever removed from body and soul. There will be healing and glory. Paul longed for that. He says, in verse 11, "...that I may attain to the resurrection

from the dead." Now that's the New American Standard Bible. If some of you have the New International version it reads, "...and so, somehow, to attain to it..."

That, "I may attain to it" (NASB), that, I may "somehow attain to it." (NIV),—both of those translations seem to convey a hint of doubt. Well Paul had no doubt that he would be resurrected—he wasn't uncertain about it.

But he expresses his hope here with an attitude of humility, to indicate that it is all by the goodness and the grace and the power of God—he had no confidence in himself. That's reflected in his statement, in the way he says it. All of his confidence was in the Lord God, and his confidence was certain, was firm, because the Lord God is faithful to His promises. He never fails. And the hope that we have as believers in Jesus Christ is a certain hope that we will be raised from the dead. We have a glorious future.

So in three verses, Paul sets forth three great doctrines. *Justification* in verse 9, *sanctification* in verse 10, and *glorification* in verse 11. They are all inextricably connected. Justification is the basis of sanctification; it leads to it. There's no such thing as being justified without being sanctified. Everyone who is justified is sanctified. Justification is an instantaneous thing. It's an act of God whereby He declares us forgiven and righteous, and He treats us as that for all eternity.

But because we are justified based on the work of Jesus Christ, because of what He's done for us, God can then take up habitation within us—He can begin to change us and transform us. That's sanctification. It is an ongoing process, and it's never completed in this life. It's completed ultimately in glorification, in the resurrection, which is our great hope. And it's a hope that should be in our thoughts continually, because it reminds us that this life is but a brief moment of time—and all eternity is yet before us.

Today is the time of labor. The rest is still coming. It's the future. And so we should ask ourselves, 'What are we doing? What are our ambitions? What goals are we pursuing in this brief time that God has given us on this earth?' A life without ambition, without goals, is an aimless life—a tragic life. But ambition only for the things of this life,



and not for the life to come, not for the world to come, a life lived for time and not eternity, that is the most tragic of all lives. And it's not a satisfying life, either.

So what is your ambition in life? To make a lot of money? To have a comfortable retirement? Those are all good things. I hope you all have that. I hope we all have that. But there's something greater than that. And that's what Paul has set forth here: It's *knowing* Christ. To know Him increasingly—that is a life of fulfillment. That is a transforming life. It makes the person who seeks it productive in the best things and prepares him or her for eternity.

Jesus got to the heart of it, I think, when He asked the question, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). Well, believers can't lose their souls but they can lose out on the best when they live for time and neglect eternity, neglect Christ. We will come to the end and we'll realize that we have little to show for our life.

In his sermon on 2 Samuel chapter 15, verse 21, Mr. Spurgeon urged the congregation to live like Ittai, who lived for David, who wanted to be with him and to serve him. That was a well lived life. It illustrates devotion to Christ and being loyal to the core. Spurgeon urged that upon his congregation so that, in his words, "Their death pillow will not be stuffed with thorns of regret." That's a great statement: "Our death pillow will not be stuffed with thorns of regret."

Well, it won't be if we make Paul's ambition our ambition: To know Christ; to know Him personally. That will produce a fruitful, well lived life. That is a blessing to ourselves; that's a blessing to others and that pleases the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, of course, if you're here and you don't know Him, that's not your ambition. You're lost, and your future is not the glorious future that Paul speaks of in the resurrection. Your life is not one that's full of resurrection power. But it can be, through faith in Christ alone. If you're here without Him, we invite you to come to Him, to trust in Him, whom to know is life eternal. And then may He be the focus of your life. Let's pray.

LORD, make that the aspiration of each and every one of us: To have Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our vision, the object of our great affection, the one that we seek to know. Thank You for Him, for His death for us, and for all that we have in Him. And it's in His name we pray. Amen.

*(End of Audio)*