

I WANT TO KNOW CHRIST

I want to begin this morning with a reading from God's Word, from the book of Philippians, **chapter 3, beginning in verse 1, through verse 14:**

I am grateful for the opportunity to be standing before you again this morning, with the privilege of bringing you another lesson from God's Word. I am grateful, but I have to tell you, I wanted to call this lesson, "We Preach Christ Crucified...Again and Again." I wanted to do that but I was afraid you might see that title, and seeing that it is a repeat of last week's title, and the week before that, you might think to yourself, "What's he doing? Does he just have one sermon?" I was afraid that if you saw that same title, you would be tempted to tune out or give your mind to other things. So I came up with a different name, "*I Want To Know Christ.*" Even so, I want you to know, I am still talking about Christ and him crucified.

I hope all of you know me well enough to know that I'm not doing this because I don't have anything else to preach about. I know there are a lot of other interesting, important topics that we could be dealing with; things that are vital and helpful. I want to devote more time proclaiming Christ and Him crucified because I believe the better we know and the more we understand who Christ is and what He accomplished for us, the more effective we are going to be in doing the planting and watering that is needed so God can grow His kingdom and be glorified. I am convinced that one of the reasons why evangelism is all but dead in most places is because while we call ourselves the church of Christ, our emphasis has been upon the church and not the Christ.

I am afraid too many Christians have learned all they want to know about Christ! They know who He is, they believe what the Scriptures say about him. They know what He did in coming to earth. They know all of these things and yet they it is obvious that they really do not know Him because He is not the first thing they think about in the morning and He is not the last thing they think about when they go to bed at night. And don't you think He should be? If He is who we say He is, if He did what we say He did, what do we owe Him? We owe Him everything don't we? And if we owe Him everything, why do we give Him so little? Why do we give Him so little thought? Why do we give Him so little time? Why is everyone else and everything else so much more important to us? If He is my everything, why don't I talk about Him more to others? Don't you think it a little strange that we are not really comfortable telling others about Him who we say means more to us than anyone or anything else in the world?

Paul said he wanted to know Christ. You can't read those words there in Philippians 3 without sensing Paul's passionate desire to truly know Christ. Well, didn't Paul already know Christ? Didn't he meet him on that road to Damascus? Was he not Christ's chosen instrument sent to the Gentiles? What did Paul mean, "I want to know Christ?"

Did he not know who Christ was, or what He had done for us? Absolutely Paul knew those things. Look at **chapter 2** of this letter to the Philippians. **Beginning in verse 5 (thru 11)**, Paul writes:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7) but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9) Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul knew Christ was God. He knew that He was God who took upon Him the likeness of men, a human form. He knew Christ had been put to death on a cross. He also knew that Christ had been raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God, and given a name that is above every name. And notice this, Paul also says, Christ is so exalted that at the very mention of His name, every person ought to drop to their knees and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!

I wonder why we don't do that. Why don't we drop to our knees every time we hear the name of Christ? Why is that? Why aren't our tongues confessing Jesus Christ is Lord more than they do? Why do you think that is? Is it because we know Christ too well, or is it because we may not really know Him at all? Think about that, will you? That's all I'm asking. I'm not asking you to agree with me. I just don't want you to come in here and leave saying you've worshipped God without really having given some of these things some serious thought.

Paul wasn't saying he wanted to know Christ because he didn't know him. He wasn't simply saying he wanted to know Christ better, as if all he needed was some more information about Christ. When Paul said that he wanted to know Christ, he was saying that he wanted to understand everything that it was possible for him to know about Christ. He wanted to understand the wonder and mystery of this God who became man in order to redeem him and every other sinful creature.

Paul was saying, *"if you want to know something, now that's worth knowing!"* I know the world doesn't understand that! What we call the media today certainly doesn't understand that. Can you imagine that? Christ is not news!!! Really? The fact that the Creator of the universe has emptied Himself and taken on a human form, and allowed Himself to be pushed around by the very people He made, and then put to death, but then raised from the dead three days later, ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT'S NOT NEWS? IF THAT'S NOT NEWS, GOD HELP US, WE HAVE NO IDEA WHAT NEWS IS, DO WE?

The apostles and the early saints, they understood that was news! In fact, that's what they called it—the "GOOD NEWS!" Why would anyone not want to pass on good news, especially to those for whom it would be good news for them as well. I mean, if I win the *Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes*, and I'm about to begin receiving 50,000 dollars a month for the rest of my life, why would I be reluctant to share that with anyone? I understand why you

might not want to do that for security reasons, but you get my point. That would be good news, but what if everyone I told that good news to could also be eligible for 50,000 dollars a month? Why would I want to keep that to myself? Think about that.

If you've been struggling with cancer, you've undergone surgery, and chemo-therapy, and radiation therapy, and you've been so sick at times you wanted to die, but now the doctor says that all the indications are that you are cancer free. Do you think you would find it difficult to tell others about that?

Maybe one of the reasons why we find it so difficult to tell others about our Lord is because we may not really understand or appreciate what Christ did for us. Oh, I know we know that he came died for us. I know that we know he took our punishment. I know that we know as **Isaiah (53:5)** says, that "... *he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.*" I know that we know all of that, and we truly are thankful and indebted to Him. We know "we owed a debt we couldn't pay, and He paid a debt that He didn't owe." We know all of that, but DO...WE...KNOW...ALL...OF...THAT?

Do we really understand the price He paid? Have we got any idea about that? I don't think we do, for the most part, we don't have any idea. Jesus once told a parable that might give some idea. Do you remember the story of the forgiven but unforgiving servant found in **Matthew, chapter 18**? Peter had come to Christ with a question. He said—**verse 21**, "*How often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?*" And what did Jesus say to him? He said, "*I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven*" And that's when He told this parable. There was a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And he found one that owed him 10,000 talents. Let's stop for a moment, you already know this, but let's try to understand what Jesus was saying. A talent was a measure of weight, generally considered to be 75 to 100 pounds. So a pound of gold at today's value would be about 16 billion dollars. Tell me, how are you going to pay a debt of that size? You can't. So the king ordered the man to be sold, along with his wife and children. Thankfully, we don't live under a system like that today. If we get into debt, way over our head and ability to pay, we can at least declare bankruptcy, and we may lose everything we have, but we don't go to jail, and they don't take our wife and children from us.

16 billion dollars! That's what our little sins have cost us. Oh yeah, every sin you have ever committed, most of which I might add, you weren't even aware of committing, every sin rang up another 16 billion dollars in debt! Do you see where I'm going with this? But we tend not to think like that. We tend to think that we have been pretty decent people. But we haven't been pretty decent people. If we were pretty decent people, Jesus wouldn't have had to die for us. The fact that Jesus did come and He did die tells us that we have not been pretty decent people. **And then someone has the senseless gall to say, "Show me in the Bible where I have to come back on Sunday night!"** Have you thought about the tens of thousands of times you have heard the name of Jesus Christ and you didn't fall down immediately and worship Him?

You think you are a pretty decent person? Paul says that isn't true. "*There are none righteous, no not one!*"

We think that Jesus came to take our place; to suffer the punishment for our sins, but have you ever thought about the fact that Jesus' death was not so much His getting what we deserved as it was God getting what He deserved? Let me say that again: "*Jesus death was not so much a matter of HIS getting what WE deserved, as it was GOD getting what He deserved.*"

You might wonder what I mean by that? Well think about that, what does God deserve? He deserves to be worshipped, right? That's right. He deserves to be obeyed, right? That's right. He deserves to be loved, Amen? And just who is supposed to worship God, to obey God, and love God? Men are supposed to do that, aren't they? And who has ever done that? Has anyone from the dawn of creation until ever done that? Has any man done that? Have you done that? No, no man has ever done that. But wait, that isn't true. One man did do that, didn't He? And that man's name is...?

AND THAT MAN'S NAME IS...? [JESUS!]

AND THAT MAN'S NAME IS...? [JESUS!]

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AND THAT MAN'S NAME IS...! [JESUS!]

Think about it beloved (not by me but by your Creator) how are we supposed to love God? We are supposed to love Him with all of our heart and soul and mind and strength, aren't we? Have we done that? No, we haven't done that! We may try, and we may even weep bitter tears because we want to but can't; we try and but we find ourselves falling so far short of the glory of God.

Paul said, "*I want to know Christ. I want to know the power of his resurrection. I want to share his sufferings, and I want to be like Him in His death.*" Paul was saying, I want to know Christ so I can be just like Him. I want to know what it is like to be alive with resurrection power. I want to know what it is like to suffer for a cause that makes all suffering worthwhile. I want to be willing to leave it all on the field in my attempt to give God what He so truly, truly deserves.

What did Jesus come to do? Think about it brethren. What did Jesus come to do?

- Did He come just to take my place on the cross, so I could get off scot free, and live a decent moral life for the rest of my days?
- Did He come just so I could go to heaven?
- Did He come just so I would have something to do on weekends?
- Did He come just to replace 39 old books with 27 new books?
- Did He come to put me into a strait-jacket; to keep me from ever having any pleasure?

Think about it...Why did Jesus come?

Oh, I know He came to seek and save the lost. I know that. I know that He came to taste of death for every man. I get that. I know that He came to begin the Kingdom of God, but I also know that He came to give God what He deserved, what He had always deserved.

WE WOULDN'T GIVE IT TO HIM! Even the best among us have failed miserably. And so because He couldn't just overlook that, He took the most amazing step; He became one of us, and lived among us for thirty-plus years, and when He died, there was not one sin that ever was committed, or ever would be committed that was not atoned for. When He died, God finally had what He wanted from mankind. And in His willingness to humble Himself before God, and be nailed to that cross, He was given a name that is above every name.

For the past two weeks I have been giving you an assignment, to go home and spend some time thinking about Jesus; thinking about His story because God wants each one of us to tell that story to everyone we can. In His story there is a chapter about us, but the story is not about us; it is about Him. And that's why I need to know Christ, and why you need to know Christ.