

# Philippians 3 (Part 1): 1-11 • I want to know Christ

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We're in Philippians chapter 3, so have your Bible open there, please. As we continue our study here on Sunday morning in Philippians chapter 3, we're going to read the first 11 verses of the chapter. Follow along as I do, please. It begins this way:

*“<sup>1</sup>Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.<sup>2</sup> Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.<sup>3</sup> For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (you might want to underline that phrase right there: and put no confidence in the flesh, Paul writes,)—<sup>4</sup> though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for 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; as to the law, a Pharisee;<sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*

*<sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order 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 comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—<sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,<sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.” (ESV)*

Stop there. Let's pray again.

Father, we want to confess to You, as we get into these Scriptures, our absolute and utter need of Your Holy Spirit to bring light and understanding to the Scriptures that we're looking at here today. We do not confess any self-sufficiency as it relates to knowing, understanding, and apprehending Your Word. In fact, we confess to You our complete need.

Lord, now enlighten our hearts; open our eyes; open our spiritual ears. Let us see and hear what You would have us to know, for we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

As you can see, the apostle Paul begins here, chapter 3, with an exhortation to rejoice in the Lord. Very significant since he wrote this from prison and that someone would begin a letter from prison with a reminder to rejoice. But we're going to talk more about that in the next chapter. Paul's going to get into that even further, and so I'm going to leave that until, really, the next chapter.

But then he goes on to say in verse 1, if you look with me, continuing in that verse, he says: *“To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is (actually, he says) safe for you.”* And it's interesting to me that the apostle Paul makes no apologies for giving them the same instruction that he had given them before.

Have you ever gotten into church and you heard somebody starting to speak, and you kind of went, I haven't heard this before. Or maybe you even started reading your Bible, and you were familiar with the passage, and there's this kind of temptation to kind of say, well, I know what happens here; I know how the story goes, if you're reading a narrative. Or I know what the apostle Paul's going to say here because this is that chapter on the thing that he says about the thing about the deal; I've read that and I know kind of what's going on there, and so forth.

But the apostle Paul doesn't take the same approach as it relates here to what he's sharing with them. He says, I have no problem sharing again and again. The same thing with you guys. In fact, he says, it's a safety. It's actually a safe thing for you.

And here's what's interesting. I find that Peter actually repeated this idea of repetition and safety. Let me put this on the screen for you so you can see it together here from 2 Peter 1. He writes:

**2 Peter 1:13-15 (ESV)**

*I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*

*I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon (that's a way of saying I think I'm going to die soon), as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. (And look at this) And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.*

And so, he says, I'm stirring you up by way of reminder, and I'm going to make sure that after I depart and go to be with the Lord, you're going to be able to recall the things that I've shared with you by instruction because there's safety in that. There's safety in it so resist the temptation to skip over a passage.

Can I confess to you? I have seriously felt that temptation at times, particularly if I'm reading something that's kind of laborious. There's this one particular passage in Genesis where Abraham gives his servant all these instructions for going to get a wife for his son. And he goes through all this stuff and then the servant gets there to where he's supposed to go to find a wife, and he repeats all of the instruction instead of just saying, my master sent me here to get a wife for his son. He goes through all of it again, and I mean—it's like reading the same passage over and over again. And I remember coming to it at times saying, okay I know what this says.

But Peter and Paul weren't making this exhortation to you and I about repetition and reminder simply because they'd run out of sermon material. They were saying it because the instructions of God's Word are so important that they can literally save our lives.

And repetition is a key to understanding, like it or not. In fact, this is something that advertisers—you guys know that I was in radio for many years before I got into the ministry, and I learned very quickly that advertisers—understood this principle. This whole idea—and, frankly, research has borne out the fact that people have to hear an ad multiple times before they really hear it. I mean, they've got to hear it before they hear it. You know what I mean? And advertisers know that; that's why you see ads on TV and radio repetitiously, and you're kind of thinking to yourself, didn't we just hear this commercial? They must've made a mistake. They played this commercial, then they played another commercial, and then they played the same commercial again. Oh, they knew exactly what they were doing. That is not a mistake. They're doing it on purpose. They want, in fact, if they could, they'd play their commercial back-to-back-to-back because they know that if you haven't really heard it multiple times, you haven't really heard it.

There's also—it's not just repetition, too, as far as hearing things over and over; it's also hearing things when you're ready to hear them. Do you know what I

mean by that? Have you ever read a passage in the Bible and you kind of just passed over it, and then you heard it later on when you were going through a particular time in your life that was challenging, hurtful, whatever, and suddenly you saw that passage again, but you saw it in a completely different way, and suddenly it meant like everything to you? And you know you've read it before, but now your heart had been made ready to really, truly receive the message.

And that's one of the other reasons why repetition of the Scripture is so important because you might be going through a time in your life at one time while you're reading the verses where they just kind of, you read them and then they go away. And then you are—have you ever noticed when you're going through a rough time, you open up the pages of Scripture, and it's like a lifeline? It's not just words on a page; it's like you cling to every single word of the text and you're just like, it's food for your soul; you feel like you're suddenly listening; you're suddenly looking and seeing. Suddenly, the Word of God changes everything.

All right, now, as the apostle moves along here in verse 2, he kind of has a rather harsh word, you might notice, for an individual or a group of individuals we've talked about before, particularly when we were going through a study of Galatians. And they are called the Judaizers. Here's what Paul says in verse 2: *“Look out for the dogs.”* He's talking about men here, and he clarifies it. He calls them evildoers; in fact, he goes on to refer to them as mutilators of the flesh.

Let me stop there and explain just very quickly again. There were a group of certain Jews in Paul's day who literally went around, followed him from church to church. And when Paul would leave, they'd get there and they would begin to speak to the people about—and they were Jews; again, they were Jewish legalists, and they believed that believing in Jesus for salvation wasn't enough but you also had to be circumcised according to the law. And they went around to the churches and confused the believers related to this. Paul considered what they did a perversion of the gospel. Make no mistake about it. He calls them evildoers, and he wanted the believers to avoid that confusion at all costs.

He goes on to say something kind of surprising. Look what he says in verse 3, and this deserves a little bit of our attention: *“For we are the circumcision (he says), who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”*

I want you to stop there for just a moment. I want you to think about that verse because it is critical to understanding, really, the entirety of this passage. Here's

the deal. You see, these Jewish legalists considered themselves right with God because they had submitted to the Jewish right of circumcision and therefore, they were glorying in what they had done in their flesh.

Paul declared that those who put their faith in Jesus were the true circumcision. He didn't just say, you have spiritually been circumcised, because what is circumcision? It's a cutting away of the flesh. We all know that from a physical standpoint so, what is spiritual circumcision? It's a cutting away of the old man. It's a dying to the old life, the old me; the old unrepentant, unregenerate me. All right, so that's what circumcision kind of means in a broader sense. But Paul says, by faith, you are the circumcision.

Here's the deal. See, the Jews referred to themselves as the circumcision. That's what they called themselves because they followed the physical right of circumcision for the males. So, they called themselves—they said, they used to say—we are the circumcision of God. And Paul says, actually, you know what, you guys, we who put our faith in Jesus are the true circumcision. And this is something that all legalists have a really hard time understanding as it relates to putting our faith in Christ, and through that faith, walking in fulfillment to the law.

Man, if you could just read for a day some of the comments that come in on our YouTube channel, they don't see the light of day because I don't let them through, because they're just confusing. But oh, people get so mad. Legalists get so mad at the preaching of the gospel, the understanding of grace, which they don't have, and they believe that you have to do all these things in order to be accepted by God and to be saved ultimately.

And so, you see, legalists, because their mindset is on what I have to do, they have—they don't understand this whole idea of, by faith, fulfilling the law and what the law commanded. They don't get it; they don't understand it; they don't see it. They'll see a part of it, but not all of it. And you got all these people who believe in Jesus, but they believe you also have to do something. And some of the people that get mad at me the most are the Sabbatarians, those who believe that you also have to keep the seventh day Sabbath, and they, I mean, they get angry because they don't get it. They don't get that in Jesus, by faith, we keep the Sabbath. They think you got to keep one day. But in Christ, you see, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Sabbath. By faith, receiving Jesus, I am keeping the Sabbath because I'm resting. And that's what the Sabbath was all about, wasn't it? It was about resting.

Wasn't that what the Sabbath was about in the Old Testament? But that was a type. It was a shadow; it was a pointer of something that was to come, a greater fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. When you and I rest in His finished work on the cross, we keep the Sabbath seven days a week. Legalists don't get that. You are the Sabbath rest in Christ, by faith, because He has allowed you to rest in what He did, not in what you do. We put no confidence in what we do; we put every confidence in what He did. Right?

Let me show you a passage from Matthew chapter 5. I love this passage.

**Matthew 5:17 (ESV)**

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

*“Do not think (Jesus said) that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”*

Jesus is telling you and I that in His life, in His ministry, in His death, in His burial, and in His resurrection, He fulfilled the law and the prophets, and the keeping of those things is bound up as we put our faith in Him. I believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. I believe that what He did was enough to save me, right? And in so doing, I am, I become the circumcision; I become the Sabbath rest of God in that sense that my faith is in Him, right? And all these things that the law demands are fulfilled in Him, and by faith in Him, we keep the demands of the law.

It's really a beautiful picture, but like I said, legalists don't get it. Legalists don't understand it, and they didn't understand then in Paul's day, and they don't understand today. So, that's the point of what Paul is kind of writing about here. He's contrasting that difference between confidence in what we do, confidence in what Jesus did.

When somebody says to you, here's what you got to do, here's what you got to do to be saved—and they start talking about pointing to things that you have to do like keep this, keep that, do that, do this, do that—just say to them, do you do those things? And, of course, they're going to say yes, and then just ask them this question: Is your confidence then in what you do? Is that where your confidence lies? They may not like the question, but the implications of what they're telling you are exactly along those lines. Their confidence is squarely in what they do: the keeping of the commands and demands and other things related to the law.

Look what Paul goes on to say in verse 4. Look with me in your Bible, he says: *“though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. (In fact, he says) If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: (Right? Kind of like my dad can beat up your dad sort of a thing; so, check out this interesting list:) <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, (kept the command of circumcision related to the Old Testament law given to the Jews) of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews;...”*

What does he mean by that? Not all Hebrews were focused on being Hebrew. There were a lot of what we call “Grecian Hebrews” that had adopted the Grecian lifestyle and the Grecian way of thinking, and they had a very... They were Jews by birth, by DNA, but they had a very non-Jewish kind of approach and thought to life. But Paul says here I've been a Hebrew of Hebrews in the sense that not only was I born Jewish, everything that is about the Jews and important to the Jews, I made it important in my life.

*“As to the law (he says, I was) a Pharisee.”* That was the highest sect of those who claimed to be able to keep the law; there was no one above the Pharisees in terms of the Jewish understanding of keeping the law.

He says, *“as to zeal”*—and that was something that Jews really appreciated: Jews who had zeal for the law. And he says, hey listen, my zeal motivated me to be a persecutor of Christians. I dragged them out of their homes, arrested them, threw them into jail, and I was there when Stephen was being martyred, and I was put—I said, yes, kill him; get rid of him; wipe him away. And again, these are all things that the Jews would look at and just go, whoa.

And then he says, *“as to righteousness under the law, blameless.”* So again, Paul says, if anybody has bragging rights, he says, I do, because everything he mentions here was extremely important to him and to any Jew. But at least up until Paul came to know Jesus Christ.

You see, those things were his righteous standing before God. If somebody would have asked him, Paul, do you have a righteous standing before God? He would have pointed to the very things he just mentioned right here, and he would have said, you bet I am. You bet I am righteous before God.

And I'll tell you why; he would have—it's probably why he had them easily on the tip of his tongue here. He's probably used to reciting them before. This is why, this is why. Without these things, Paul essentially had no standing before God. But then after coming to Christ, he realized that no one will be able to ever earn their way into God's favor by their own personal effort.

And that is why he wrote what he said in verse 7. Look with me in your Bible, verse 7. He says, “...*whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*” Whatever I thought was on my— the side of righteousness or what made me righteous before God, I have considered it as loss now. I've lost it, I've lost all those things for the sake of Christ.

You know, once in a while, I like to read some of the more paraphrased Bible translations, and they don't always do a good job of accurately reflecting what is being said word for word, but sometimes they do a really good job of reflecting the heart of the message.

And so, I don't necessarily recommend a real loose paraphrase but I want to show you this verse out of the New Living Translation (NLT). Here's how it goes:

**Philippians 3:7 (NLT)**

*I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*

*I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.*

That's quite a change, isn't it? Have you ever talked to somebody who was religious? And what I mean by that is they had all these kinds of religious rules that they followed in their life, and when you talk to them about their relationship with God, the only thing they talk back to you about is the keeping of all these rules, the things that they have to do in order to be accepted before God.

Can you imagine what it's like for a person like that who has placed all their confidence in the things that they do and then to turn around and completely change? Can you imagine what that's like? I mean, to suddenly—and I don't know how suddenly it is—but to realize that all of these things that I consider to be my righteous standing before God, they're rubbish, they're nothing. These things don't help me in the slightest. And that's what religious people ultimately have to learn, is that religion doesn't get you to God. Religion doesn't work.

Religion is useless to getting you to God. You can't earn your way to God. And whenever I talk to religious people, they always have a long list of things, but it doesn't work. That's what Paul is saying. That's how I once lived, but it's the way I live no more, because now I have come to understand that all those things that I once considered my ticket to heaven, they're useless.

That's a great question to ask somebody. If there's a ticket to heaven, what is it? When you're at work talking to somebody and you know that person hasn't come yet to Christ, just ask him, hey, if there's a ticket to heaven, what is it? Describe it for me. Nine times out of ten, people are going to start talking about religious things, things you got to do. Well, you got to be a good person; you got to live a good life. In other words, what you're telling me is, you have to put your confidence in your flesh, in what you could do.

Do you understand that that is the point of what Paul is saying here? I put no confidence in the flesh. None. I, he says, I used to have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, and if somebody thought they had reasons, I had more reasons. But I've come to realize that those aren't really anything at all.

Look with me again in verse 8. This is a wonderful verse too. He says: *“Indeed, (not just the religious things, he says) I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.”*

When he's talking about loss here, again, he's talking about things that I used to think were in my plus column, things that I used to think I had going for me. I have counted them now all as rubbish that I may gain Christ. What does it mean to gain Christ? He's talking about the incredible benefit of having a relationship with Jesus Christ, and that's something religious people don't understand.

When you're talking to a religious person, they're involved in all their rules and regulations but they don't have a personal relationship with Him. You start talking about a relationship with God, they're kind of like, I don't get that. That's not part of my experience. God is someone you have to please, right? You got to work hard to please Him because He's not usually in a good mood. In fact, God's usually in a pretty bad mood for the most part, and He's pretty much just waiting to smack us at whatever little excuse comes along. I keep the rules. Keep the rules. I do the thing; you got to do the thing; I'm working hard to do the thing so I don't get smacked, and I'm hoping someday that the good things are going to outweigh the bad things. Relationship with God? Who'd really want to have a relationship with God? This God that goes around smacking people all the time. Who would really want to do that sort of a thing?

But Paul is saying, no, no, no. I have jettisoned all those things that I might otherwise have thought were in the plus column for helping me to earn God's favor so that I might gain Christ, so that I might have a relationship with Him. And what Paul is saying to you and I is that when we are fixated or focused on

doing things for God, it actually is a barrier to gaining Christ. In other words, it's actually a barrier to having a relationship with Jesus. Wow. Now there's an interesting thought. The works of the flesh actually are a barrier.

Are you trying to be a good Christian? Are you trying to do good so that God will be impressed? You know what you've done? You've put up a barrier to really knowing Him in personal relationship. Paul says, I've jettisoned all those things so that I might gain Christ, so that I might gain and have that personal walk with Him, that personal relationship with Him. I had to get rid of all of these things. Why? Because you see, my flesh— if I'm focused on my flesh and what I can do, that becomes a substitute for the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Have you ever thought about it that way? My flesh can easily step into the role that Jesus should be having in my life, and instead of listening to Him and following Him, when I'm focused on my flesh and what I can do, I am listening to my flesh. I am following my flesh. And I've noticed something about my flesh; it frequently demands what I am supposed to think about. My flesh likes to demand the things that I should do; it tells me what to do. My flesh likes to do that. My flesh tells me, all right Paul, here's how you're going to think, and here's what you're going to do. Right? My flesh likes to be in charge, but when my flesh is in charge, my relationship with Jesus takes a backseat because you can't have two lords. You can't have two lords. All those things—that fleshly kind of focus, it holds us back from a close, intimate relationship with Jesus.

I don't think I'm going to surprise anybody when I say I am sure that everyone in this room, myself included, has gone through a period of time where you, we felt distant from the Lord, right? You go through those times, right? You just, you feel like your relationship—if somebody were to ask you, a scale of one to ten, one being coldest, ten being the warmest, how would you rate your relationship with God right now? There are times, I would say a one, and I'm willing to bet the same is true for you.

But when I think about those times when my relationship with Him is at its coldest, I begin to realize that those are the times that are marked in my life by a heightened focus on my flesh. On me. I'm thinking about me. I'm not thinking about Him; I'm not focusing on Him; I'm not focusing on obeying Him, living for Him. I'm focusing on living for myself and obeying my flesh. And what happens? My relationship with God begins to cool gradually until it's at a one. Right? And I'm kind of wondering—and people will say, man, what can I do to have a better relationship with the Lord? You know, it's just like, it's just so cold; it's so distant.

Recognize what makes it that way. Recognize that you have gotten your focus away from the Lord and gaining Christ, and you've put it on you, whether religiously or morally or whatever the case might be. This is when you and I need to come with like the apostle Paul and say, everything of the flesh that would otherwise demand all of my time and attention, I consider it as rubbish in order that I might gain Christ, in order that I might have a personal and intimate walk with him.

Oh, my flesh gets in the way, isn't yours? It'll be grand when one day we set it aside, this fleshly existence, won't it? Won't that be great? But for right now, it's something that we have to deal with. But the only way I can deal with it, the only way you can deal with it, is in the power of the Spirit.

See, that's the problem with the flesh. The flesh can't repudiate the flesh; the flesh can't destroy the flesh; the flesh is not going to crucify itself. Yet we're told to crucify the flesh, are we not? It only happens through the power of the Holy Spirit. Guys, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to be able to say to the flesh, no, you may not have control. You may not dominate my thoughts; you may not tell me what to do. I'm going to listen to my Lord, and I am exercising the right to say you are not welcome on the throne of my heart, and I want Jesus to be there. And so, then I come to Him in humble submission, as we even sang today, I surrender all. All to Jesus I surrender. I come to Him and say, Lord, I am so tired of being dominated by my flesh. Now, enable me by the power of Your Spirit to say no and to give back that place of Lordship to You. Wow, that is such an important thing.

Look at verse 10 with me if you would please. Here's another reason why Paul gets rid of the flesh in the standpoint of that domineering, dominating power of the flesh to control his life, to demand his attention, and to dictate his favor with God. He says, I count that all as rubbish *“that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and (also) may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”*

Wow, four things there. I want to know Him and I want to also identify with Him, and that means sharing in the things that He has. I want to share in the power of His resurrection.

What does that mean? Is Paul talking there about the resurrection? No, not specifically. He's talking about the power of the resurrection, and the power of the resurrection is something that's available to you and I today to live our lives. That same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you and I. He says, I want to know it; I want to share it; I want to experience it. But he says I

so want to know Jesus I'm even willing to be identified with Him in His sufferings; I want to somehow become like Him in His death.

By the way, when Paul talks here about I want to know Christ, this is not intellectual knowledge. This isn't something you learn by opening a book or studying. The Greek word here for “know” means experiential knowledge. He's saying, I want to taste the goodness of the Lord. I want to know. I want to know. I don't want to just read about it. I want to know it here.

And then Paul ends with this statement in verse 11. He says, “*that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*”

It's kind of funny. This last verse that we're looking at here today verse 11 has actually caused Christians some consternation in years past because to some people it sounds like Paul's uncertain that he's going to be participating in the resurrection. That is not what he is saying, and Paul did not have any concerns about his participation or any uncertainty concerning the resurrection of the dead.

The word “attain” here in the Greek when Paul says that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection, that word attain means “to arrive.” And so, what Paul is essentially saying here is I want to know Jesus, and I want to know Him so completely, and so thoroughly, and I want to be identified with Him; I want to identify with His power; I want to identify with His suffering; I want to know everything He has planned for my life and in, and for, and in whatever means He determines that I should give up this life, whether by means of natural death or by means of martyrdom it doesn't matter. I embrace whatever may await me so that I may finally arrive at that place of the great resurrection from the dead.

That's what he's saying, and if that wasn't clear enough, there's a—I found a quote from one of my favorite Bible teachers of the past, Harry Ironside. Can't wait to meet him one day. He said this. This is his kind of commentary, and he's saying, this is essentially what Paul is saying:

*I long only to know Him more intimately—let the suffering involved be what it may. I would even die as He died, or die any other way that He might choose, in order to be included in the great catching away of all the saints at His coming. I want to follow whatever way will lead me to the glorious resurrection from among the dead.*

*— H.A. Ironside Expository Commentary*

*I long only to know Him more intimately—let the suffering involved be what it may. I would even die as He died, or die any other way that He might choose, in order to be included in the great catching away of all the saints at His coming. I want to follow whatever way will lead me to the glorious resurrection from among the dead.*

That's what Paul is saying. It doesn't matter, I want to know Him, I want to know Him. And this is the interesting thing about this. Paul did not limit his life experiences when it came to knowing Christ. What I mean by that is, he didn't just say, I want to know Him in blessing or wealth or plenty. Paul was willing to know Him in difficulty, in pain, in challenge.

Are you willing to know Him that way too? Am I? That's the question, really, of the day. Are you willing to know Him even through the challenges that you struggle with on a day-to-day basis? Are you willing to know Him through your difficulties? Because you see, He can be known in those things in sweet, intimate fellowship.

And so, what Paul is really saying here in this section is, I surrender all. I surrender and I am willing. Whatever He has for me to know Him in that.

Paul's life was hard at least the last several years anyway, it was very hard. And, although he doesn't give it to us in the Bible, we know through church history that he eventually had his head cut off. Doesn't sound like a very glorious end, does it? But Paul was probably, as far as we know, beheaded in Rome, caught up in that huge persecution of believers under Caesar Nero, who was a madman.

But when he was alive, he dealt with incarceration, chains. Chained like an animal. He dealt with sleeplessness; he dealt with hunger; he dealt with anxiety and difficulty and challenge at every turn. And yet Paul here, getting toward the end of his life, says, I want to know Him even in those things; I want to know Him through those things; I want to know Him in the midst of those things; I want to experience Jesus in every way and through everything. So instead of taking the things that you've been going through lately in your life and pushing them away and saying, no, I don't want this, I encourage you to embrace those things and to know Christ in them, to learn of Him through those things, to have intimate fellowship with Him in the midst of your pain. Cry in front of Him; tell Him how you feel; explain every aspect of what's going through your heart like David did, and know Him in the midst of your pain. Know Him. He is to be known.

Such a wonderful reality. I surrender all. All to Jesus I surrender. Let's stand together. Let's pray.

I am convinced that there are some things that the apostle Paul says in his writings that we don't get, or we struggle to understand, I should say, because we just don't experience on a regular basis that level of surrender, that level of laying it all out before Him and just saying, whatever, whatever comes by whatever means, I want to know Christ. But I think that's where He is known most effectively.

We're going to have people available to pray with you as you're leaving this morning.

Father, thank you so much for your Word. Lord, we are not worthy of this Word, not one of us. We are not worthy of its beauty, of its majesty, and its power. And yet, Lord God, not by anything we have done, but by what you have accomplished, this Word becomes a powerful and dynamic, life-changing reality in our lives. Father, I pray for the things that your children are going through right now. The difficulties, the harshness, the hurt, the pain. And I pray, my Father God, that they would know You in intimate fellowship come what may. That they would know You and be identified with You in Your suffering to know the power of your resurrection. We thank You and we praise You in Jesus' precious name, amen.