

**KNOWING CHRIST**  
**“I want to know Christ**  
**and the power of his resurrection**  
**and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings,**  
**becoming like him in his death” – Phil.3:10**

(Part 1 of 5 Messages)

Introduction:

- What would you be prepared to die for?
- What is the most important thing in your life? What matters most to you?
- What do you value more than anything else in all the world?
- What is your greatest pursuit?
- What would do you prize more than anything else in all the world?

Let's ask these questions to the apostle Paul.

His answer: Nothing is more precious, of greater value than knowing Christ. See Phil.3:1-14 (vs.8,10); 1 Cor.2:1-5 (v.2)

“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” (NIV) “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” (NAS)

KNOWING CHRIST is our theme for the following Wednesday morning devotions. Only a very small “taste” or encouragement to have the same resolve or determination that Paul had.

As we go through these studies, God's Spirit will be opening our spirits to some of the same truths that had captured Paul's heart and mind. That had become His one consuming desire: TO KNOW CHRIST. And He will be calling each one of us to make the same pursuit the no.1 pursuit in our lives as well – above everything else, including even serving Christ or doing so many different things for Christ.

So we will be challenged to go beyond the point where we are right now in knowing Christ. We will be called to action. To the extent that we would be willing to give up everything else, even our own life? Amid all the other elements of our lives, all the interesting things we do, to what extent can we say that KNOWING CHRIST is far above all the others?

Let's ask God to take these truths and implant them deeply upon our hearts.

### KNOWING CHRIST

What did the ancients understand when they used the word "knowing" in relation to a person?

Background to "knowing" from the ancient Greek & Hebrew worlds:

The pursuit of KNOWLEDGE in Greek cultures – like in Corinth – was a pursuit that was prized most highly. This is what Paul had found in Athens, Corinth and elsewhere. See 1 Cor. 1.

The Greek understanding of knowledge (gnosis) was radically different to the Hebrew understanding. For the Greeks, "knowledge" was that which was studied with the mind and mastered; whereas for the Hebrews, true "knowledge" was truth that had the potential to change or affect the whole of one's life.

To know God, therefore, for a Greek was to seek to master different ideas about God – ideas that could be discussed and debated; whereas for the Hebrew, to know God was to know His acts experientially, to hear His words of truth, and to fall down in absolute surrender before this God to worship Him and to praise His name. cf. Gen.4:1.

The Greek knowledge of God puffed a person up with spiritual pride (1 Cor.8:1); whereas the Hebrew knowledge of God brought one to one's knees, on one's face before God.

How then did Paul know Christ? Obviously in the Hebrew way – as a living Person, not just as a religious idea or even an important historical figure.

Previous knowledge:

Paul once knew Christ before his conversion in a human or worldly way. See 2 Cor.5:16. Like the many Jews who saw Jesus when He was alive. See Matt.13:53-58. People can hear much, know a lot, about Christ – have much knowledge, but just in a very human way.

Paul now knew Christ as He was in reality or in truth = His Lord, the very Son of God. God through His Spirit working within Paul's heart and mind had made the spiritually blind able to see.

Illustration: Like a young man who suddenly “sees” just how beautiful and attractive a particular young woman is, or a young lady how desirable is a particular young man. Other people do not see anything special. But that one person – because of something that has happened in the heart, not just in the head – has special “sight” or “insight”.

WHAT ABOUT US? How can we say in truth we “know Christ”? Just in the mind? Or profoundly impacting the deepest level of our very being?

The Spirit Christ has removed our spiritual blindness so that we can now “see” and “know” who He is. This must continually lead us to worship.

Different levels of Paul's “knowing” Christ:

- Knowledge = knowing and comprehending the doctrines of Christ – Paul had done a lot of deep thinking guided by the Spirit of God into the truths about Christ as rooted in the OT – so that he was able to argue convincingly that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (Acts 14:1; 19:8). Application: Study with all your might to deepen your understanding of the Person & Work of Christ – make knowing Him and understanding in depth the highest pursuit of knowledge that you give yourself to. Don't be satisfied with a shallow and sentimental level of knowing Christ – depending only on feelings/emotions. Ground yourself in God's truth

using your God-given mind under the control of the Spirit of God. See 2 Tim.2:15.

- Knowledge = spiritual knowing (see 1 Cor.2:12-13; 2 Cor.4:6) – in the spirit, not just in the mind – through the Spirit we come to know Christ in the spirit rather than just in the intellect.
- Knowledge = experiential, experiencing the living presence of Christ alongside of him in any situation or crisis – something real, that can be as it were “tasted” – enjoyed to the full – delights and pleasures – being apprehended or conquered by Christ just as a “lover” conquers the “beloved”. See Acts 23:11. Application: How open are we to this level? This takes us beyond the mind where we are mostly in command – right to the level of the spirit where “understanding” is not laid aside but overcome by God’s power.

Hymns:

“Jesus the very thought of Thee”

Closing:

The fundamental purpose of these studies is so that we might know Jesus – that we might grow closer to Jesus – that we might worship Jesus more deeply – that we might proclaim Jesus more clearly and powerfully – that we might enter into the very heart of Jesus.

God has through Christ’s death brought us into a most wonderful relationship with Jesus, His Son. This is the relationship to be most prized above all other relationships and “things”. To know Jesus is to know the Father – and to know the Father is to know eternal life. John 14:9; 17:3

Here is the apostle Paul – the hardest worker of them all in missions – yet we see his highest resolve and determination was to know Jesus Christ.

If we have a very weak longing to know Christ – no determination or resolve – then we need to come before God and plead with Him that by His Spirit He will change that. He will do this if we truly long for it.

There is no higher pursuit than to know Christ. No higher goal to reach to. No greater truth to study. Long to know the One who is infinite and eternal, yet who reaches down into our lives on an intensely personal level so that we might behold Him in all His glory – and enjoy Him forever.

Jer.9:23-24