

"THE EXCELLENCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST"

Philippians 3:8

INTRODUCTION

1. Prior to his conversion to Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul was on the "fast track", a "rising star" in the religion of Judaism - cf. **Ga 1:13-14; Ph 3:4-6**

2. But once he came to know who Jesus Christ really was, all the power, all the prestige, all the position of influence that he once had, meant nothing - cf. **Ph 3:7-8**

3. What mattered now was for him to "know Jesus Christ":

"...I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..." (Ph 3:8)

4. What is there about the knowledge of Jesus Christ that makes it so desirable for people like Paul and countless others? And should we desire this "knowledge," how do we gain it?

[To answer these questions, let's first make some observations about...]

I. THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST THAT IS "EXCELLENT"

A. IT MUST BE A "PERSONAL" KNOWLEDGE...

1. We cannot come to know Jesus solely through another person's acquaintance with Him
2. While we may initially learn about Jesus from others, especially the authors of the New Testament, we must come to know Him for ourselves
 - a. Like Paul, we must speak in the first person: **"that I may know Him" (Ph 3:10)**
 - b. The "faith of our fathers" must become OUR faith, for God does not have any "grandchildren"

B. IT MUST BE AN "INTELLIGENT" KNOWLEDGE...

1. Jesus does not expect us to commit "intellectual suicide" to know Him, He desires us to use our minds as well - **Mt 22:37**
2. Thus we should desire to know all the Word reveals about Him...
 - a. His natures, both divine and human
 - b. His offices, both as king and priest, savior and shepherd
 - c. His works, both then and now
 - d. His past shame and suffering, his present and future glory and exaltation

C. IT MUST BE AN "AFFECTIONATE" KNOWLEDGE...

1. If I know Him at all, I must love Him
2. Indeed, I am accursed if I do not! - cf. **1 Co 16:22**
3. As with our minds, so we must love the Lord with all our hearts - **Mt 22:37**

D. IT WILL BE A "SATISFYING" KNOWLEDGE...

1. It will satisfy where other things do not - cf. Paul's willingness to forego the advantages he had in Judaism
2. It will be the "bread" that fills our hunger, and the "water" that quenches our thirst - cf. **Jn 6:35**

E. IT WILL BE AN "EXCITING" KNOWLEDGE...

1. The more we know of the "Beloved", the more we will want to know
2. We will come to realize that in Him **"are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"** - **Co 2:3**
3. We will realize that **"in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"** - **Co 2:9**
4. And that WE are **"complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power"** - **Co 2:10**

F. IT WILL BE A "HAPPY" KNOWLEDGE...

1. For in Him is the key to joy despite all our circumstances - cf. **Ph 4:4**
2. We may have tribulation, but in Christ we can have joy! - cf. **Jn 16:33**

[Such is the "excellence" of this knowledge of Jesus Christ! Is it not worth having? More than anything in the world! - cf. **Ph 3:8**

But how do we get it?]

II. GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST

A. THE WORD OF GOD IS ESSENTIAL...

1. The only accurate source for learning about Jesus is the Word of God...
 - a. Movies, books, magazines, etc., written by men can be entertaining and sometimes instructive; but such are often filled with erroneous concepts
 - b. The only reliable source is the inspired Word that we call the "Bible"
2. And we should not limit our search for knowledge about Jesus to the four gospels...
 - a. The Old Testament contain Messianic prophecies that reveal much about the nature of Christ - e.g., **Is 9:6-7; Micah 5:2**
 - b. The book of Acts describes the only history we have of the beginning and early years of His church
 - c. The epistles reveal much about His present work as our King and High Priest - e.g., **He 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 1 Pe 3:22; Re 1:5-6**
3. So if you wish to truly learn of Jesus, you must commit yourself to a study of the Word of God!

B. BUT SO IS OBEDIENCE...

1. It is not enough to just have "head knowledge" concerning Jesus Christ
2. For the "true knowledge" of Jesus comes only as we obey Him - cf. **1 Jn 2:1-6**
3. And especially as we develop the qualities of character He displayed, which is the goal of all His commandments - cf. **2 Pe 1:5-8**

- a. Note that it is only when these Christ-like qualities are **"yours and abound"** can it be said that we are **"neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."**
- b. This is what it really means to **"grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."** - 2 Pe 3:18

CONCLUSION

1. Have you come to "know" Jesus Christ our Lord? Have you begun to experience what Paul called **"the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord"**?
2. If not, why not start today? The Savior's tender invitation is still open to all who heed it:

**"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest."**

**"Take my yoke upon you and LEARN FROM ME, for I am gentle and lowly in heart,
and you will find rest for your souls."**

"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light"

- Mt 11:28-30

You can come to Jesus by heeding the gospel message He wanted the whole world to hear (**Mk 16:15-16**), and then continue to learn from Him as you heed all the things He commanded His apostles (**Mt 28:19-20**)!