

Philippians 3

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[0 : 00] Let me ask you a question as we start looking into this passage a little bit more deeply. What one thing is there in your life, one thing that is worth to you more than anything else, that you would even give up everything else for the sake of this one thing?

There's a song in the States, it's a country song, and although many of you might not have heard it, the words are applicable, I think. There's a situation in the song where a boy and a girl are on a date together, and they just come out of the movies, and a man, a stranger, comes up to them and grabs the girl by the arm and pulls a gun.

And he says, just do what I say and nobody will get hurt. And this boy says to him, take my wallet, take my money, take my credit cards. Here's the watch my grandfather gave me.

Take the keys to my car, mister, give it a whirl, but please, don't take the girl. That one thing, the girl, for that boy was worth more to him than anything else.

And the other things are very valuable, are they not? His wallet, his credit cards, his car. All of these things are very valuable to him, but in a moment, he would give any of them up.

[1 : 20] Just don't take the girl. So, how about us? What one thing is worth all else? We saw in Philippians that we just read that Paul mentions some things that are of high value to him.

Reasons that he can take confidence. In other words, reasons that when people look at him, he's okay in their eyes. He's a confident guy because of these things.

So, I want us to picture something as we get into this. Picture maybe seven things. Seven things that you've worked hard for in your life.

Seven things that you've really wanted to get. You've worked hard for, maybe you will work hard for them. Maybe you have them. Seven things that are really worth a lot to you.

I want you to picture these things. And I'm quickly going to run through the things that Paul mentions. And I'm going to try and make some rough parallels for us. There's not exact parallels.

[2 : 25] But I'm sure you'll forgive me. There'll be some rough parallels. And if you don't like the ones I pull up, draw your own. So that we're all thinking about these things. Paul mentions, I was circumcised on the eighth day.

I have reason to have confidence because of that. I'm going to call that having the name brand stuff. Whether it's clothes, whether it's a car, whatever it is.

The things that are top of the line. So that when people look at you and they know that about you, you have good confidence. That you're doing okay. Because you have this badge that says you're okay.

He mentions, I'm an Israelite. Not only that, I'm a Benjamite. Not only that, I'm a Hebrew of Hebrews. So I don't know, maybe you're talking to somebody who's international and you say, I'm from the UK.

Not only that, I'm from Scotland. Not only am I from Scotland, you should see my tartan. My clan. Top of the line.

[3 : 31] Maybe you're impressed. And you want others to be impressed. Maybe we should be impressed with this. Paul also mentions, as to the law, I was a Pharisee.

So how can we understand this? If you can picture yourself back in that day, as you're walking around the streets, if you were to look across the street and see a Pharisee walking, you would think, that's a guy who has it together.

With regards to the law especially, he is top notch. He's a level above me. So perhaps it's social prestige, we can call it. Popularity.

So that when people look at you, they think, whoo, that person, I'm not there. That person's just, you know, they've got it going for them.

Social prestige. He says, as to zeal, I was a persecutor of the church. Now, in his Christian life, Paul looks back on that zeal and he says that that makes him the center of sinners.

[4 : 34] However, it does put him above the rest in zeal. I mean, if you want to talk about passion for something, Paul had it. He had so much passion that he actually persecuted people that he thought were blaspheming his God.

So we'll just call that passion. We admire passionate people. People who know what they want and they go for it. Maybe you value that. Maybe that's something that you seek to attain and that you would like to be known for.

The last thing he mentions is, as to legalistic righteousness, or as to righteousness in the law, I was faultless. He's a moral guy. He's just an upstanding person.

When people look at him, they say, he's good. He doesn't do... He's not one of these sinners that runs around. This guy's a good guy. And maybe that's something that you would like to be known for. Being a moral person.

Being upright. Alright, suppose you... As you're picturing these seven things, things that you value, that you work hard for, and maybe you get them.

[5 : 40] Now suppose you meet Jesus. And you get to know Jesus. Then, picture a man coming up to you and threatening you with a real threat.

And he says to you, okay, you can either have those seven things that you've been working hard for and that you're proud of, some of which are good. You can either have those or you can have Jesus.

But if you say you're following Jesus, I'm going to take away all these other things you've worked hard for. You will never be seen as a prestigious person again in society. People will look down on you in society.

In fact, I'll degrade your character so that nobody knows that you're a moral person. I'll take away all these things that you've worked hard for if you want Jesus. But you can have these other things if you simply deny Jesus.

What would you do? I mean, if you were actually faced with a situation like that. Paul was faced with plenty of situations like that and his conclusion was, I count all things, all of these things, as loss.

[6 : 51] He says, I count them as rubbish, trash, the things that you don't want in your house that you want to get rid of. The same word is used for animal excrement. He says, that's the way I count these things in comparison to knowing Jesus.

Now, this leads us to a question. Why does he count all these things as loss for the sake of knowing Jesus?

What's so special about this Jesus? It's nice how in Philippians, Paul has already described this Jesus.

So that when he gets to this point and he says, everything's rubbish compared to knowing him, we already know who he's talking about. So, right now, I would like for us for a few minutes to turn back to Philippians 2.

Because we do have to know, who is this Jesus that is worth more than anything else? Philippians 2. I'm going to start reading in verse 5. Philippians 2.

[8 : 02] Philippians 2. 5. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God as something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God highly exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

That's the Jesus that Paul says, that's who I want to know. I'd rather know him than have anything else. So let's look for just a few moments at some of these things that he says about Jesus, because I think, I think we'll be shocked when we really get into this about who this Jesus really is. And the first thing, just mentioning the fact that Jesus walked on the earth as a human, so that people actually looked into his eyes, talked with him, ate with him, he was God, the one through whom all things were created.

Can you imagine looking into a human's face and that person actually being God? I think it would shock us.

[9 : 45] I don't think we'd believe it if we saw someone now that was like that. But here, Paul says, he's God himself. Look at some of the things he says right at the beginning.

The very first thing he says, Jesus Christ, who being in very nature God, now it literally says, being in the form of God. Later on it says, he took the very nature of a servant.

Literally it says, he took the form of a servant. So as much as Jesus was a servant, in that same way, he was God. Now I've talked to a lot of Jehovah's Witnesses and they don't believe that Jesus is God.

They're fairly convinced that Jesus was, he's better than everything else, but he was created first. So he's not God himself. And some of them will take you to this passage if you ever talk to them. And they say, look, he was in the form of God. That's not the same thing as being God. Which I actually think it is because he was in the form of a servant also and he was surely a servant.

[10 : 50] However, look at this next phrase. Being in the very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. What on earth does that mean?

I've always found that statement very confusing. But it's actually, the way Paul wrote it originally in his own language is a little more clear than what we can do in English.

So I'm going to paint a picture for you that hopefully conveys what Paul is getting at by this. That he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped. And I bring this up because one of the Jehovah's Witnesses I talked to, he argued from that statement, he said, look, Jesus couldn't even grasp the idea of being equal with God because he's not.

But is that what Paul's saying here? That Jesus couldn't grasp the idea of being equal with God. I want you to pretend that you are an army.

The Bon Accord army. And you have marched against a village or a city. And you've had a vicious battle with this city. And you win.

[12 : 01] Yay, go Bon Accord. You're victors. Okay, so you've conquered this city. Now, as you look around, as you walk around the streets, having conquered it, you're seeing things like goats and sheep.

You see things in people's houses. You know, silverware, expensive things, nice things. We all know about these. We call it plunder. Spoils of war. That the soldiers, after they have defeated a place, they'd go in and they'd take this for themselves.

Plunder. And that's not actually bad. In the Old Testament, many times God does say, I want you to wipe out the city totally.

Do not take a thing from that city. However, sometimes He says, no, take your spoils of war.

Because many times, soldiers were not paid for being in the army.

Their payment was, if you win, you get to keep the things that you find. the plunder, the spoils.

That's the word that Paul uses here.

[13 : 01] A thing to be grasped. That phrase in English, something to be grasped, that's one word in Paul's language. One word, and that is spoils of war.

Plunder. What he says here is that Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God as plunder, as spoils of war.

Now, again, in Paul's own language, it literally, it does not say that he does not consider something. It actually says he does consider. He considers equality with God not plunder, not spoils.

And this is the point. Jesus, who is in the form of God, very nature God, when he considers what it means to be equal with God, which is the point, when he considers the equality with God that he does have, how does he think of his equality with God?

You can picture Jesus contemplating, what does it mean for me to be God? Well, it's not like spoils of war. That's what Paul's getting at here.

[14 : 16] So what is it like? It says, being in very nature God did not consider his equality with God as plunder, something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant.

The idea, you know, if you're as an army and you take the plunder, what's the purpose of this plunder? It's for you, right? I mean, that's why you take it. It's for you to enjoy.

It's your own personal benefit. That's why you take these things. And that's what Jesus says, my equality with God is not, I don't look at it as for my personal benefit.

I look at it as something that is supposed to benefit others. So what does he do? Jesus, who is God, equal with God, by very nature God, views his equality with God as something for him to in some way sacrifice to benefit people.

So what does he sacrifice? He does not sacrifice, and I want to make this clear, he does not sacrifice being God. Paul never, Paul never, Jesus never gave up being God.

[15 : 38] Even while he was in human form, which he still is in heaven actually, even being human, he never stopped being God. He did not sacrifice that. But what did he sacrifice?

Paul tells us here. One thing we could say is he sacrificed some of his privileges of being God. God has the privilege of being glorious, absolute riches in glory.

glory. And what did Jesus do? He took the form of a human, weak and frail, not glorious, so that when people looked at him, they were not impressed.

So Jesus decided that being God meant laying down the privileges of glory to be weak and frail and not impressive.

He also sacrificed his rights. Think about the rights that God has. He has any right he wants. Particularly, God has the right to be served.

[16 : 42] To be served by his creation. That's the right that God has. But what did Jesus do? Being equal with God, he became a servant.

I mean, can you imagine this? God, who should be served by all of us, who should be served by everything he created, he decides to actually serve us.

Not only this, but Jesus gave up his own life. I mean, picture this. God, the creator of life itself, he decides that what that means to be God is that he will die so that people who are dead can have life.

So he sacrifices the privileges of being God, he sacrifices his rights, he sacrifices his life itself for the sake of benefiting others.

Because Jesus does not consider his equality with God as plunder to be enjoyed by only him. It's for others. So that's the Jesus that Paul describes here.

[18 : 08] So that then a few paragraphs later, a chapter later, he can say, I'll give up everything. I don't care what it is. I don't care how people see me and what good things I have.

I give them all up to know this Jesus right here. The surpassing worth of knowing Jesus is what Paul says.

So I have another question for us. What does this mean for us? What does knowing Jesus, this Jesus, what does that mean for us?

And I think we can look at two things as we bring our time here to a close. we can look at what this means for us personally and then also what it means for us in relationship with each other.

And it's nice, you know, some passages a preacher has to think a little harder to apply the passage. But it's great here because Paul applies his own passages in both of these things we read.

[19 : 12] So we're just going to read what Paul says. So Philippians 3, the passage that we read were verses 1-11 about knowing Jesus.

What does Paul say starting in verse 12? What does this mean for us personally? He's talking about attaining the resurrection from the dead and knowing Jesus and the power of his resurrection. And he says, not that I've already obtained all this or have already been made perfect, but I press on. to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it, but one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.

So personally, Paul says I want to know Jesus, and what that means is I forget what lies behind, and I press forward, press on to what's ahead of me, and that's Jesus Christ.

[20 : 30] The things I think he's talking about forgetting, forgetting what's behind, are the things he's just mentioned. Those things by which he used to want to be known.

he used to want to be known as someone with social prestige, who was a moral, upstanding person, all these qualities about himself, that's how he wanted to present himself, so that when people saw him, they were impressed.

And here he says, look, I forget this stuff. I press on to be known as one who knows Jesus. That's what I want to be known by.

And that's why I'll give up everything else for the sake of this. Because Jesus is worth it. So personally, let us perhaps think about these things that we value more than anything else.

And what it means to know Jesus, to forget what lies behind and press forward. So that's personally. What about in relationships with each other?

[21 : 32] What does it mean to know Jesus? So again, Paul applies his own ideas. Let's turn back to Philippians 2. what he's about to say about Jesus that we looked at.

Right before that, he tells us why he's about to tell us about Jesus. Look at verse 3. Chapter 2, verse 3.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

each of you should look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus who, being God, looked at that as something to sacrifice for others' benefit.

Did you know that God treated us as if we were more significant than himself? God is more significant than us, and he knows it. But Jesus treated us as if we were more significant, dying so that we could have life.

[22 : 47] So he says that's how we're supposed to relate to each other. Not being selfish, but actually treating each other as more significant than ourselves. So what does this mean, say, for students?

For youth and teens and students, what does this mean for us? When we're interacting with our friends, when we're at school, or even at home, what does it mean to actually treat someone else as more significant than yourself?

Especially someone who you don't think deserves it. Because Jesus, we don't deserve his benefits, but he gave it to us anyway. So what about those who you don't even particularly like?

Is it possible to treat them as more significant than yourselves? Because that's what Jesus is like.

Or how about married couples? Husbands and wives?

Husbands, how do we relate to our wives? What does it mean to treat them as more significant than ourselves? Even giving up our own rights and privileges many times for the sake of benefiting them?

[24 : 00] Or wives, likewise to your husbands? What does knowing Jesus mean for you? And fathers, or parents and children, what does this mean, parents, for treating your children?

And likewise children, how do you treat your parents? To treat them as more significant than you.

No matter what age we are, knowing Jesus should affect our lives because of who Jesus is.

So, that question at the beginning, what one thing would you consider as more significant than anything else, that you would indeed give up anything to have that one thing?

You can perhaps imagine yourself saying the words of that country song, take my wallet, take my credit card, take my money, take the keys to my car, but please, don't take Jesus.

That's the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ because of who he is and what he has done. Please pray with me.