

That I May Know Him

It is a wonderful blessing to gather together to worship our Lord. I have been asked to share on Philippians 3:10 'that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death'. I have already shared on it once. We dared not grow weary on this passage. And we were touched by the depth of the scriptures even as we sang the hymn 'My Goal is the Lord Himself' tonight. Let us have a word of prayer.

We come to You Lord Jesus, the true and faithful witness. Whenever You said I am God, You have called us to be Your witness and for this we need the power of the Holy Spirit. We wait upon You tonight, O Lord, You who renew those who wait upon Thee. Strengthen our body, heart and mind to follow after Thee. We thank You for Your precious word. Now open Your word to us by the Holy Spirit. We pray in Jesus precious name. Amen.

Let us turn to Philippians 3. We want to see how Apostle Paul witnessed for the Lord.

Philippians 3:7 – 14 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which come from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 43: 10 – 12 "You are My witnesses", declares the Lord, "and My servant whom I have chosen. So that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me. I, even I, am the Lord, and there is no savior besides Me. It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed, and there was no strange god among you. So you are My witnesses," declared the Lord, "and I am God".

Isaiah 43: 18 – 19 "Do not call to mind the former things, or ponder things of the past. Behold, I will do something new. Now it will spring forth. Will you not be aware of it? I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert".

We are gathered together this week because God has called us – you are my witnesses. We read what our God said to Israel in Isaiah 43 – I am God and you are my witnesses. You can see that in this passage, witnesses have a secondary importance. First is God. God speaks, acts and reveals Himself. God does something. If God does not do something, if God hides Himself, a witness does not have any value at all. Jesus spoke to his disciples ‘I am the resurrection and the life. You are my witnesses’. So why are we witnesses? Jesus said ‘there is no other name under heaven and earth by which a man can be saved except the name Jesus. You are my witnesses. I am the Lord Jesus. I died and rose again. You are my witnesses’.

We discover from Peter a very interesting factor in this business of witnessing. When Peter began to witness on the day of Pentecost we discover that he gave us a very important context to witness. He said what you saw was what the prophet Joel prophesied. ‘In the last days I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh’. And so we are witnesses at the end of a time. Peter said, ‘in the last days I will pour out my spirit. We are witnesses to this. What you see is a demonstration. This is the end of a stage’. So we are to be witnesses of our God.

Witnesses for God are different from an eyewitness in a court. In a court the person gives an eyewitness of what he has seen. But a witness for God is more than that. Not only do they witness of the things that they have seen, as the apostle witnessed the resurrection of Jesus that they saw. But God’s witnesses are to speak of the things that they have seen in the unseen. God’s witnesses walk under an open heaven and they see things that others do not see. We heard yesterday in Hebrews 11 that those who had a good testimony are those that saw things that were unseen. So was Abel, so was Enoch, so was Noah, so was Abraham. They saw unseen things and bore witness to it. Now we are asked to be witnesses of things that are assumed to take place. You remember the apostle John got revelations from Jesus Christ of those things that are sure shortly will come to pass. And so John witnessed. I saw the glory of the Son of Man among the golden lampstands. I saw the Lamb comes out of the throne of God and takes the scroll. I heard the angels saying the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of Christ. I saw the dragon and his angels were thrown out of heaven. I beheld the Lord say ‘behold the tabernacle of God is among men’. And then as said in Isaiah, John heard the Lord say ‘behold I made all things’. John saw all these things. And he witnessed all the things that will shortly come to pass. And in the heavenlies he saw that all these have been done. So when we see the Lord said I am about to do something, behold, I will do something new, will you see it? So why are we here as witnesses. Are you here to listen to our brother preaches whatever he wants? Are we the witnesses here for you to listen? What is the Lord going to do here among us? Do we hear the testimony of the witnesses about these? Are we here to receive some bible knowledge? What do you see the Lord doing now? You are my witness.

There was a famous Danish preacher and his congregation sometimes criticized his messages. So he turned things around in his messages. He gave them a metaphor. Imagine this is a drama,

a play when you come for Sunday worship. You supposed I, the preacher am the actor. You the congregation are the audience. And as in all drama, there is an offstage prompter who reads the line just in case you forget. God is the prompter offstage. But then the preacher said you are wrong. God is the audience. You are the actors. I am the one prompting offstage. So the issue is not what we have to say here tonight.

At the end of these days, the last days, what are we to witness to? You are my witnesses. Acts 1:8 said, *'but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth'*. And so the disciples witnessed what they saw and heard from Jesus. Many people got saved and many were ushered into the kingdom of God. Last time we mentioned the apostle Paul was one of those saved by the witness of Stephen. And we have already heard in Acts 26, Paul testified that when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus Jesus said 'now I have appointed you to be a witness and a servant of all that you have seen and all that you will see'. So for the rest of Paul's life, when he went to a new city, he preached how he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He witnessed that Jesus has risen from the dead and He is the glorious Lord and Messiah. We remember as Paul began to serve the Lord and to witness what he had seen, the Lord began to open heaven and to reveal more and more about who He is. When Paul met Jesus his Messiah on the road to Damascus, he had no idea he had met the creator of the universe. But the more the Lord revealed Himself, the more Paul bore witness of Him. And Paul became what I said to the young people, the witness of the macrocosmic Christ and microcosmic Christ. Christ the Lord preeminence in the whole universe and Christ living in you. Now seeing such greatness changed and transformed Paul.

I know I am speaking to some people here who are very, very smart. There might be somebody here with a double doctorate. I cannot believe that anyone who has this double doctorate can stay sane. Can you imagine one being a doctor of astronomy and a doctor of atomic research? The astronomers are going crazy today. The universe is exploding with galaxies and galaxies. The astronomers keep building bigger telescopes and sending out satellites. The more satellites they send out, the more unbelievable things they see. It is driving them crazy. But can you imagine an astronomer also is a doctor in atomic research? Doing research looking at the particles under the microscope? Or trying to find the particles that you know is there but you cannot see. It is crazy. You cannot hold the macrocosmic and microcosmic Christ without being overwhelmed with the unfathomable riches that is in Christ Jesus. But Paul boiled it all down in his beakers to its very essence. Here is Paul's witness. Christ is my life. Christ is my supply. Christ is my goal. We spoke about that last night.

Today we want to speak of the knowledge that Paul was reaching out for that was yet to be attained. And when you look at his testimony in Philippians 3: 10, there are tremendous fragments that need understanding in his testimony. He said he wanted to be found in Christ. He

was not talking about his salvation. There is something more here. And he wanted to know more about Christ in the power of His resurrection. And there is more of Christ to be known in His sufferings. There was yet more of Christ to know as Paul was conformed to His death. And then Paul mentioned something that is yet to be attained. I wanted to lay hold of that I was to lay hold of. I did not consider myself to have attained it yet. I wanted to gain Christ. I wanted to attain the resurrection from the dead. Here was the goal. There is a prize waiting for me. There is a high calling of God in Christ Jesus. All of these fragments that Paul shared rose upon one another as Paul shared his testimony. We want to simply try to see what these things mean.

Before we begin let us make three initial statements. All of these statements – being laid hold of, knowing the sufferings of Christ and being conformed to his death are all forward definitions of what it means to know Christ. All of these things have to do with knowing Him, His work and His glory. Number two, all of these things mentioned are available to every Christian believer. These are not for just the elite, the apostles. But for every Christian the same things applied. And the third, when you look over all of these statements, they all involve something further and beyond our initial salvation and our coming to the Lord. Tonight I want to take this testimony and break it into three parts. Let us see what Paul was reaching out for.

For the first statement, Paul said in verse 12 *‘Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus’*. The Lord Jesus laid hold of the apostle Paul for a reason. And Jesus’ initial statement to Paul was I have called you for this purpose, to be a witness of the things that you have seen and the things that you will see. Paul immediately obeyed and began to witness in the synagogues that Jesus is the Messiah. And as Paul obeyed and as he grew in the Lord he became a teacher, an apostle. And so the Lord had laid hold of Paul to be a witness, a teacher, an apostle, a bondservant. But is this really why Jesus apprehended the apostle Paul? Does God need an apostle Paul? The Lord is after something more. The only way the Lord is going to bring him up into His higher calling was to show more of Himself to this wonderful apostle. And so we understand that Jesus revealed Himself again and again to the apostle Paul. And the Lord revealed mysteries to the apostle Paul that have been hidden in the heart of God from the foundation of the earth. But everything that Paul saw in the mysteries of God was through the lens of Christ. Now you know the full body of Paul’s work. There are so many revelations that Paul received.

Let us mention just a few. Paul saw the revelation of the Godhead of Jesus Christ. When Paul met Jesus Christ, he met the Father and when Paul met Jesus Christ, he met the Holy Spirit. He said, *‘the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in Christ Jesus’*. And then Jesus revealed Himself within Paul. And then Paul had his great message to all the Gentiles – Christ in you the hope of glory. And then Paul in all of his servings, in all of his strength and in all of his will met his match when the cross of Christ broke him and he came to Galatians 2: 20. When do you

think it was that Paul saw Romans 8 destiny? At some point, Paul was looking at the mirror of Jesus Christ and he got something. We have been predestined to be conformed to the image of this Jesus Christ, God's Son. And God has chosen us. God has called us. God has justified us and God has glorified us. What a revelation! When he fellowshiped with brothers and sisters, he saw the church is Christ Jesus and He is the head, He is his life and it is a living organism.

And then God revealed to Paul how He would one day restore Israel. And at the same time, God revealed to Paul that Jews and Gentiles are joint heirs in the kingdom of God. And Paul saw the cross was the power of God to deal with Satan and the world and our old man and even our human wisdom. And Paul also saw the imminent return of Jesus and of the rapture. Now coming into the excellency of such knowledge regarding Christ has to change your life. And so the first conclusion we come to in the first part of Philippians 3 is this: Paul's testimony was the pursuit of love. He was like the Shulamite woman, running to try to find the king. To know him is to love him. What a wonderful testimony it was! He was absolutely captivated. He was like Moses up on the mountain. You remember how much Moses loved Jehovah? Up there in the mountain while he was interceding for the Israelites, he said, O Lord, if I have found favor in Your sight, show me Your ways. And the Lord said I will show you My way. Then Moses said, Lord, show me Your glory. You can see the love. Paul was also a love pursuit of the Christ he loved. Just like David who had a heart for God. One thing I seek of the Lord that I ask of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord. Paul was captured. Are you captured? I hope you have no small knowledge of Jesus Christ. The most excellent knowledge that you will ever gain is to discover who Jesus Christ is. And that was Paul's testimony.

And how do we get to know Him? Maybe we should take one of these buildings here and make it a monastery. Then we take our bible and go there all day long to read the bible. The weather is perfect. We just go out to the trees and look down to the ocean and see God. If you go to the monastery and study the bible, you will learn something about Christ by the Holy Spirit. If you pray, you will get to know Christ. But do you notice that Paul throughout the years there were three avenues by which he came to know and love the Lord? First, you always meet the holy Lord on resurrection ground. We know the Lord as we live our life and as we serve Him. And we get to know Him in our moment of weakness or in a time of failure or when we are feeling emptiness or when our minds are anxious. That is to say, death works on us till we meet Him on resurrection ground. It was in weakness that Paul met power. Maybe in your family or fellowship, it goes through time when death seems to be on everything we do. Suddenly in the midst of it, the Lord breathes upon us and brings us the resurrection life. We like to meet the Lord on every ground by our effort. But it is only on resurrection that Paul said I have met the Lord.

Paul also testified that we meet the Lord Jesus when we share in the fellowship of His sufferings. We suffered sometimes because of sin but this was not what Paul referred to. It is in fellowship with His sufferings that we find Him. Jesus said the world will hate you because it hated me. Have you ever suffered because you witness for Christ? Have you every suffered for righteousness' sake? Rejoice, for greater is your reward in heaven. Have you ever learned obedience from the things you suffered? How many do you think obedience is easy? You realize obedience is difficult especially when you have children. The way the Lord does it is: take My yoke upon you and learn of Me. How many of you still have a rash in your neck from the yoke where the Lord taught you obedience and you suffered? Have you ever suffered for His name's sake? Have you ever suffered for the sake of the body of Christ? Paul said *'I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions'*. When you fellowship in His suffering you will meet the Lord who is closer than a brother. When you go through tribulations, you meet the God of all comfort. He comes very close. You touch mercy. When you are suffering, He never adds to your suffering. He draws closer and closer. Paul said I have learned. Do you want to know the Lord? You will know Him in the fellowship of his sufferings and even be conformed to the likeness of His death. Why would the Lord want to conform us to the likeness of His death? I thought He died so we can all be happy. But we find those same things that are working in us that brother Sun shared last night. Those are humility, obedience, sacrifice and even death. We are conformed to the likeness of His death. And through that experience we understand more about the Lord. We understand His heart and His feeling. It is hard to explain but when you go through things even unto the death of the Lord, but then you understand things that you never understood before. I am part of the special fellowship of sufferings. I did not ask to be part of this. But over some thirty years ago, my older son named Dana, the son I love died in a car accident. So the Lord comforted me but my soul was broken and devastated. And through that I have become part of a special fellowship. I traveled to many places. Somebody who heard I lost a son would come to me. They lost a son or a daughter and we were one. You see they can pour out their heart to me. I have no answer. But they are comforted. They see that I am still alive and we are fast bound together in our experience. Even in this kind of sufferings we understand our Lord more. Now I understand why your heart is so heavy when everyone else is rejoicing. You are my witnesses. I am Christ Jesus. Do you love me? Do you know me? Brothers and sisters, one of the greatest tragedies in this world today are Christians who do not really know the Lord Jesus. You are my witnesses. Share the Lord you come to experience. So this is the first thing we say about the testimony. It is a testimony of love pursuit.

Here is the second thing we learn from Paul's testimony. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Paul in his testimony was very clear that there is a goal, there is a prize, there is a kingdom and there are things to be done to attain this reward. Now in this testimony in Philippians 3, we see it in two places. The first place is verse 11 which says 'if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead'. What is Paul talking about? This is not about

resurrection because every Christian will resurrect. What is this resurrection? For those who understand the kingdom, there is a reward given to those who overcome and are faithful to their king. Revelation 20 speaks in three different terms about this resurrection – the first resurrection. Revelation 20: 4 said, *‘Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years’*. Paul’s testimony was that there is a kingdom and that I served the king and there is a reward in this kingdom and I wanted to attain this reward in the kingdom. You know this is a completely missing note of the gospel in the church worldwide. We are kind of embarrassed about rewards. We do not want rewards; just give me a little house in the corner in heaven. Now after all we are all saved and we are all rewarded by grace. This brother is faithful the other is not, what is the difference. But Paul was striving for something which he saw was a wonderful goal. Some people do not care about the millennial kingdom. I will just sleep for a thousand years and then go to heaven. Paul said you are wrong. Brothers and sisters, within the calling of every one of us are the destiny and a place of reward in the kingdom of God. To live and reign with Jesus in the kingdom is in your DNA. And if you miss your reward, you will have deep regrets. Your being has been aborted. Your purpose has been aborted.

A second fragment of this testimony is found in verse 14 *‘I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus’*. Let me break this down. I press towards the mark. That means there is a finish line. And once I cross the finish line I get a prize. And the finish line is upward towards the Lord. So within the calling of every Christian there is a heavenly aspect and a higher calling to be pursued. Again we saw in the lives of the people in the Old Testament like Abraham who began to follow, seeking a city built by God. So beyond our vocation, beyond our service on the earth, there is yet a vocation and a calling upward. The writer of Hebrew exhorted the readers *‘you are partakers of a heavenly calling’*. And that heavenly calling is towards Jesus who is the apostle and high priest who sits enthroned up there. This is part of your calling. This matter of kingdom is a most wonderful revelation. And to serve the king is the most important service. Why is it nobody talks about rewards and the kingdom? Jesus talked about it. He said *‘store up your treasures in heaven’*. *‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness’*. And we get wonderful understanding of reward like crown, rod of ruling and thrones and positions and cities and all sorts of rewards. So we know from 2 Timothy that Paul knew he had a race to run, a fight to fight and a faith to keep and that there is a crown waiting for him. But when we see the burden of Paul’s testimony in chapter 3, we do not want to be distracted by the reward. What is the main point that Paul was making about kingdom reward. You get Christ and that is your reward. My goal is God Himself. Do you see that? Once it was the blessing, now is the Lord. Paul’s talking about a marriage here. This is a wonderful reward.

And then the third matter that we find in Paul's testimony is not only a pursuit of love nor only an awareness that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Remember Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3 that he wanted to be sure to build by Christ's standard and build upon Jesus Christ, gold, silver, precious stones. He did not want to build by wood, hay and straw because he will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. He wanted to build the church the right way.

Now we come to the third thing. Paul saw in his testimony of pursuit that the Lord is near. Is this your testimony? The more you know the Lord, the closer He is. We shared last time that Paul said to have a gentle spirit. Rejoice and again I said rejoice, the Lord is near. And so in Paul's pressing forward you get the sense of somebody who was stretching out as a witness, who saw something just beyond the veil, and it was almost there. And he was reaching out towards it because the Lord is coming so soon. So the Lord will have us to be witnesses. Even like John the apostle who saw something, something unseen. John heard something. He heard it three times. Behold I come quickly. And how did he respond? He said, 'Come Lord, Jesus'. That was the testimony. I see him, come. That was Paul's testimony, stretching out, I see Him. I was in grasp. This higher calling is not out of reach. This is a little further extension. And I gain the Lord. It is that close.

Now you notice that this is the atmosphere of the whole letter to the Philippians. There is a unique phrase that was used three times in the Philippians regarding his coming – The day of Christ. He only used it here in Philippians. And it refers to the day the Lord establishes His Messiahship and His throne and marry His bride. That is the day of Christ. And so Paul was evaluating everything in terms of the day of Christ. Philippians 1:6 *'For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus'*. The time frame that the Lord has begun, He will complete it by the day of Christ. In Philippians 1:10 Paul was talking about them gaining some knowledge and on love and then he said *'so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ'*. Paul wanted those saints to remain sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. That is the bride that has espoused to the Lord – keep sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. And then in Philippians 2:16, Paul said *'holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain or toil in vain'*.

Let us summarize here. In Philippians 3:11 – 14 Paul witnessed three things. One, Jesus Christ is altogether lovely, and I am pursuing Him out of love. Two, Jesus is my blessed king and I want to serve Him faithfully until I receive the reward and gain Christ. Third, I want to testify of something I see just around the corner. He is near. Which takes us back to Isaiah 43, behold I am going to do something new, will you see it? You are my witnesses and I am God. When the church stands and said, Maranatha, come Lord Jesus, He will come. Do all these seem too far off for you? Like it is well beyond the grasp? Did Paul live in another zone? I just ask you one

question. It is about the hymn that we sang. Have you heard Him, seen Him, known Him? Has He captivated your heart? Are you captured by Him? Do you say with the disciples, where else can we go? If that is the case, then you are nearer than you think. The Lord is so gracious and so merciful. We may never have the knowledge or the ministry of the apostle Paul but we can have the same heart. When Mary anointed Jesus' feet, this ministry was a little ministry. But she was recorded as having her reward. Do you know the kingdom rewards do not just go to people who do great things like the apostle Paul? Kingdom reward goes to he who is faithful in little things. Hear the Lord Jesus speak 'well done, good and faithful servant, you are faithful in little things, I will make you faithful in great things'. Now if you feel that this ministry of Apostle Paul is beyond reach, I would like to remind you that God has made full provision for every believer to reach their goal. All who are born of the Spirit has entered into the kingdom of God. Full provision for abundant grace in the kingdom has already provided to you, and it just keeps on increasing. Do not say I cannot love Jesus as Paul loved Jesus. The same agape love that has been shed in Paul's heart has been shed in our hearts and we can agape because He first agapes us. Everybody has a calling in the body of Christ, and within that calling there is a higher calling of the Lord. The Lord has given us not only signs and fruits of the kingdom but witnesses to help us run the race looking unto Jesus who is the author and can finish that race. There is a cross for you where all strength and unbelief are swallowed up in blessed hope. It is not about you. He is faithful. This is not out of reach. The kingdom is within grasp. The king is in the door. Are you a witness of that? I have one more thing to say to you. There is an abiding place for you. Jesus has gone and prepared it for you and He is coming to receive you unto Himself. Nobody made it clearer than the apostle Paul. We do not look to ourselves to be faithful but we do look to Him, the faithful one. He has begun and He will finish. Now we are witnesses. What is the Lord doing? What is happening right now? Do you see it under an open heaven? Then bear witness of it and it will come to pass. You are my witnesses and I am God.

Lord, we are so thankful that we can cast all our care upon You. Lord that we who have come to know You were captured by Your love. But now we want to lay aside all the encumbrances and the sins that beset us and run the race, looking unto Jesus. Come Lord Jesus. Perfect Your work among us. Prepare us for the day of Christ. We pray in Jesus, our Messiah, the king's name. Amen.