

Paul knew that Jesus was calling Him to do even more than this. Paul continued to mature in his faith, and he knew that would continue for as long as he lived. But he didn't focus on past accomplishments or even that incredible encounter with Jesus. Paul kept something else in his sights.

*Philippians 3:13-14, 16, 20 NLT - 13 No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. ... 16 But we must hold on to the progress we have already made. ... 20 But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior.*

*Paul had both good and bad things in his past. But his focus was on the future and God's promise. We don't want to live in the past either. Are there areas of the past that are particularly difficult for you to put behind you?*

Paul reminds us that we are citizens of heaven awaiting the return of our Savior. This is a future worth focusing on, the return of our King Jesus.

### **WRAP-UP**

There is nothing more valuable than personally knowing Jesus as Lord. And we cannot make ourselves worthy of knowing Him by how good we are, we will always fall short. But Jesus death and resurrection make it possible for us to be citizens of His kingdom. And as we travel our journey of faith, we should keep that truth in focus. We have been called and empowered by the risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **MEMORY VERSE.**

*I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death,  
-Philippians 3:10 NLT*

**PRAYER (20 MIN)** Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

*Challenge - Let God speak to you this week about your calling. Ask Him to help you see how to run the race He sets before you.*

## **“Knowing Christ”**

*Prison Letters- #9*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In writing his letter to the Philippians, Paul takes the opportunity to warn them and encourage them knowing that they will be tested in their faith just as Paul was himself. He had already experienced false teachers in Galatia who demanded adherence to the Law in order to be saved. Paul knew salvation was not based on things done in the flesh, but that salvation was found through faith in Jesus. Paul's desire for all followers of Jesus, was that they would know Him and become one with Him. Paul was focused on the goal that he calls the prize, of experiencing fellowship with Jesus, no matter the cost.

### **Ice Breaker**

Is there a brand that you feel has no substitute? One that you wouldn't ever trade? Maybe your brand of phone, or coffee, your shoes?

### **Key Passage**

*Philippians 3:8-9 NLT - 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ 9 and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.*

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

#### **1. False Teachers**

*Philippians 3:2 NLT - 2 Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved.*

Paul was not shy in condemning those who taught that you must be circumcised to be saved. He called them “dogs”, a term of reproach

commonly used by Jews against the Gentiles. But Paul, addressing a primarily Gentile church, uses that term for Jews teaching legalism; that is adhering to the law as your source of righteousness.

*Circumcision was important to the Jews because it represented a*

*Romans 2:25 NLT - 25 The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile.*

*Colossians 2:11 NLT - 11 When you came to Christ, you were "circumcised," but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision--the cutting away of your sinful nature.*

*covenant agreement between God and Abraham's descendants. So why did circumcision offend Paul?*

It seems we are most sensitive to faults in others that we have experienced in ourselves. At one time Paul relied on his own righteousness by following the Jewish laws (v.6-7). But after encountering Jesus he recognized that following the laws like circumcision or ritual cleansing were not enough to rid us of sin.

*Romans 6:1-2 NLT - 1 Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? 2 Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it?*

*1 Samuel 16:7 NLT - 7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."*

*Romans 2:29 NLT - 29 No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.*

*If faith in Jesus cleanses us from sin, why do we need to follow the commandments of God? (Romans 6:1-2 answers that question) What motivates you to do what you know is right if it doesn't earn salvation, or garner favor with God? If God doesn't look at what we do outwardly, what is he looking at when he examines our hearts? Can you think of ways your heart has been changed since following Jesus?*

## **2. Knowing Christ**

*Philippians 3:8-11 NLT - 8 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. 10 I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, 11 so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!*

Paul's perspective is clear- there is nothing more valuable than knowing Jesus as Lord. Our circumstances may allow us to take our salvation for granted, but for Paul, knowing Jesus was a matter of life and death. Paul had exchanged a life of prominence and position for one of persecution and danger. Why did he do this; to know Jesus and His resurrection power. The word used here for "know" is not merely fact or intellectual knowledge, it is experiential, intimate, personal knowledge. Paul was not content to understand the scriptures, although he did see Jesus revealed in the prophecies of the Old Testament. He sought a personal experience with Christ and His miraculous power over sin and death.

*What was Paul willing to do to become one with Christ? (v. 10-11) In our country we are free to express our faith in Jesus without persecution, but there are countries in which following Jesus literally puts your life at risk. Have you ever been in a situation that required you to sacrifice something for your faith? How do you think you would feel if asked to choose between Jesus and your possessions? Do we really believe that knowing Jesus is of infinite value? Pause for a moment to pray for the persecuted church and thank God for providing so richly for those of us who experience freedom.*

## **3. Forget the Past But Remember Who You Serve**

Paul had experienced a unique encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He had given up everything to follow Jesus' calling and preach the Good News to the Gentiles, including those in Philippi. But