

Philippians 3:1-16

The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ

What did you accomplish in 2015? What are you expecting to accomplish in 2016? Let's just take just a moment to do some introspection - to look inward. Did you live the way you wanted in 2015, did you love the way you wanted, or an even better question: Did you worship the way that you wanted? If we were to zoom out on our lives to see the whole, year by year, day by day - the way that God sees and knows, would you be ashamed? Would there be regret? Would there be forgiveness? Would there be redemption? Would we see Jesus?

Today I want to talk with you about a new series that we are beginning at Oxford, a series that will be followed by a report from a team that Oxford Baptist Church put into place to make specific recommendations for revitalization and renewal. The series is called: "[RE]new Oxford: That All May Know Him."

God is doing and has been doing some great things in the life of Oxford Baptist Church as many of you already know, and hopefully many of you are the recipients as well as the reason that Oxford is experiencing so much good. Here is what I mean: Some of you have grown because of the ministries of Oxford, you are loving God more and more each new day, and some of you, maybe the same of you, are helping others in our church and in our community to Love God, Grow in His Grace, and Go to the World to tell the message that Jesus saves! So some of you are the recipients, and some of you (maybe all of you) are the reason. It is good to be a part of a growing church, good to be a part of a church that God is purposefully using. Now it is our purpose to continue on in this great work that God is doing in and through us. Listen, the past is great, the present is good, but the future is glorious. How do we know? Jesus!

So, to begin our [RE]new Series I want us to turn to Philippians 3. As you are turning over there let me tell you a little about Philippi. Philippi was a town named for Phillip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. The city is rich in history but to catch us up to where the Epistle is written that we hold in our hands, we need to know that many in Philippi were Roman Veterans. Paul's message to this city rich in history is not to dwell on the past, but to hope for the future!

This will become evident in Chapter 3, but listen to the thrust of the book in 1:12 and 1:25:

*12) I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to **advance** the gospel...*

*25) Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your **progress** and joy in the faith...*

The thrust of these verses captures the direction that Paul is focusing the Philippians, a direction that the Lord God wants us to see as well. The message is: keep advancing, keep pursuing!

Philippians is perhaps the most encouraging of all the Epistles. Compared with some of the other epistles, the church at Philippi seems to shine a little brighter. This doesn't mean that there are no problems in Philippi, check chapter 4 and you will see some conflict, but compared with many of the other churches whose epistle bears their name, Philippi appears healthy. Such a condition could lull one to sleep spiritually, but Scripture demands constant and continual progress. The reason for our desire for continual progress is the aim of our ambition. As believers, our ambition is Jesus, our ambition is with Paul in 3:10 - *that I may know Him* "The world is too perilous, and the gospel too glorious for them (us) to be content with past achievements." (*ESV Study Bible*, Introduction to Philippians)

READ TEXT

3 Truths about the Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ

1. Christ Gives Genuine Rejoicing (1-3, 8-9)

- The unfortunate reality with many of the things that cause rejoicing is that rejoicing can be here today and gone tomorrow. Everyone wants to experience a new year just the way they want it. No one wants to spend 2016 at a graveside or in a hospital. This is why people gathered by the billions all around the world to watch a minute hand ring in a new year: We are searching for joy. Only Jesus can give everlasting joy!
- This is what the angels declared when the Son burst into human history in the Incarnation, the message to those poor shepherds keeping watch of their flock by night; the message to those going through the routine and the mundane, when angels burst on the scene to announce the Savior's birth:
- *Fear not, for behold (look!), I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.* (Luke 2:10)
- After Christmas, after celebrating the dawn of God making all things new, don't live life simply going through the motions. Get out of the mundane and start living in light of eternity, in light of the great reality of Christmas - God with us! Don't settle for stardust when you've been promised the universe.
- What is the genuine rejoicing that Christ gives? Look at the text.
- Salvation on account of His Grace. We are made right with God not by works that we have done but by the work that He has accomplished in His coming, living, dying, rising, saving, sealing, and soon return.
- Look at verse 3
- There were some trying to influence the Philippians with a fake form of righteousness outside the work of Christ.
- These preachers of false righteousness went by many names in the NT (circumcision party, Judaizers) but they operated around the same tenet - Righteousness comes by adhering to the law. In other words, they would say, in order to gain the favor of God you must do things (in those days) like be circumcised if you are a male etc. Present day we call these things legalism. Here is how this works
- At Oxford, we have decided to go through the Bible in 2016. I encourage you to do it. It will bring you closer to Jesus, it won't bring him any closer to you. Does this make sense? We sing about it but we truly don't understand it, and I mean we (all Christians) - Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now am found, 'twas blind but now I see. God is completely satisfied with you because of Christ. Now this does not mean that we are already perfect (as we will look at in a moment) but because of Christ, there is nothing that you and I can do to be more favorable in his sight! Our righteousness is not dependent upon our works but dependent upon His work.
- Some of you still don't believe me. Let me show you in another place:
- Romans 5, 6
- Paul preached grace so strong in 5 that he did not want grace to be misunderstood as license so he gave chapter 6 to round it off.
- Here is how this works out. Read Scripture, pray, come to church, give, but if you are doing so to earn the favor of God forget it!
- Look at verse 9 - Our righteousness comes by grace through faith!
- Your reading of the Bible in 2016 and regular church attendance should flow from love and worship, from your amazement of grace, should flow from genuine rejoicing.
- It is no trouble for Paul to write the same things again to the Philippians because only Jesus can give us the assurance of salvation, the assurance to cease striving and realize this salvation for us in every moment (Psalm 46:10).

Everything in our lives has to be seen in this light. By the way, aren't such truths unfathomable? Is there anything better than the truth of the gospel? The fact that on account of the perfect sacrificial work of the Son of God, we who were dead in our sins have been pardoned and made alive in Him! No wonder Paul could say what he says in verse 7. His entire life had been altered by grace, which is exactly what grace does.

Number 2 this AM: The reason that Knowing Christ is of surpassing worth is,

2. Christ Gives Our Life Purpose (4-7, 10-11)

- Every heart has questions. The biggest questions that we all face is the question of existence: What on earth am I here for? Does my life have meaning and purpose? The Bible gives us the answer, and the answer is yes! You and I were made to worship, were made in the image of God and thereby have the capacity of relating with Him, of attending festival before the face of God.
- Moses was told that no man could look upon God and live and we confess the truth of that statement, but one day our eyes will behold Him! We will see Him face to face in all of His glory. We will not shrink back when we see Him, we will be embraced by this God who has made us His very own!
- If what I have just said is true, that you and I were made to have an everlasting relationship with the eternal God, then, tell me, is there anything that can even come close to topping that?
- Just one thing is greater than having the capacity for an everlasting relationship with an eternal God - not just having the capacity for the relationship but having the relationship!
- So many people are so close to an eternity with him, they love truth, they love the idea of good, they are caring, loving, but they have rejected the very means of life - Jesus and are thereby devoid of their greatest purpose, the greatest adventure. Our motivation in life is summed up by Paul in 3:10 - *that I may know Him*.
- Life is full of many good things to pursue. You should become a doctor, be a lawyer, become a caretaker, a humanitarian aid worker, a teacher, but if you leave Jesus out then you will enter a circle of meaninglessness because you will have never answered the question why on earth am I here, what is my purpose, and dear friend the Bible gives us that answer and shows us in dynamic portions that God has moved heaven and earth to reveal himself to you and I. He has come to take away that which separated us from Him. He has come to bear our sin and take it away by nailing it to His cross.
- God who is rich in love, demonstrated his own love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ Jesus died for us (Romans 5).
- Nothing is greater than this! None of our pursuits can top this true story of God's works!
- Look at Paul's pedigree in verses 4-7.
- Then he comes to verse 8 and says all of it was fumbling in the dark. The real meaning of life is found in 8-11 and it rings with great triumph as it beats in the heart of the apostle and sounds in our hearts - *that I may know Him!*
- As Christians, you and I get the unique opportunity to stand before a world in darkness and declare to them truth has come. We have found the meaning of life and we are counting everything else that we have ever done or will ever do as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus our Lord
- Have you found that purpose today? Are you living your life in one direction, with one foundation?

Look at what Paul says in verse 11. In verse 11 he gives the Christian the ambition of life, the hope of our lives as believers - resurrection. The hope that we have as believers is a hope in all spheres - life, death, and even after death. The foundation of our faith as believers is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. His resurrection is the basis for all of our pursuits.

And as Paul tell us, we are to pursue Christ from beginning and for forever.

Number 3 this AM:

3. Christ Gives Us Determination (12-16)

- I love the added verse to *Amazing Grace*
- "When we've been there 10,000 years, bright shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun."
- Paul says in verse 12, don't misunderstand me. This life is still a shadow of eternity, but even in this life a light has shown
- 2 Corinthians 4:6 says, *For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*
- That life that will be ours has been guaranteed by the salvation of the Son and the sealing of the Spirit.

- Jesus has made us his own, how could we not make Him, the one who is supremely worthy, the total ambition of our hearts.
- How could we not be determined to know more and more about the riches of His grace and live our lives in light of the eternity that is promised to us?
- Why be so easily entangled with sin when we have the opportunity to strive towards the surpassing worth of Jesus Christ our Lord?
- Be determined this year, lay ahold of the God who has made you His very own. Show your determination in the way that you think, the way that you serve, and the way that you love! Let others see a man, a woman, a member of Oxford Baptist Church, determined to know Jesus.
- Here is the truth: None of us are perfect yet, but because of the perfect Son of God we will be. The truth of our future determines the way we live, the way we love, now. We now live as those who have been made right with God through the death and life of Jesus. We live understanding that knowing Christ surpasses all things!

As we set out in this brand new year as Oxford Baptist Church, let's make verses 13-14 be our prayer, let's press on towards maturity, let's be renewed and watch God do things which no eye has seen nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him. (1 Corinthians 2:9) The first step for some of you may be to embrace the truth that God sent His Son for you. Believe in Him, receive Him.