

# 14 | PHILIPPIANS 3:4-9

## THE GREAT CHANGE

*Every Christian has a testimony of salvation to share*

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### Introduction

Every believer has a testimony of how they came to faith in Jesus Christ. In these verses, Paul presents his to us. Any testimony of true faith in Christ has three parts.

- My life before Christ
- How I came to know Christ
- My life after knowing Christ

In a testimony, we always have an B.C. and an A.D. part of our lives. BC: “Before Christ” and A.D., “After Deliverance.” Do you have that kind of testimony of your conversion?

### Scripture Reading

Though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;<sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup>But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup>Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (3:4-9).

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## 1. LIFE BEFORE CHRIST (3:4-6).

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*Dead in trespasses and sins... filthy rags*

Paul explains his life before his conversion in verses 4-6. Here Paul describes his old existence before he met Jesus Christ. “If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more” (3:4). What Paul means is, *If mere religious efforts could gain anyone acceptance with God, then I am at the head of that list.* Put another way, *If anyone could find salvation through his self-righteousness, that was me.* He lists all the things in which he once put his confidence. Yet Paul was completely wrong about trusting in all his good works. Isaiah says anything we do to gain or merit God’s love and acceptance are nothing but filthy rags.

But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags...  
(Isa 64:6a).

In verses 5 and 6, Paul notes seven different facts in which he once trusted, none of which could commend him before God.<sup>1</sup>

...circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

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<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted from Steven Lawson. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (Epsom, UK: The Good Book Company, 2017), 152-153.

## IMPRESSIVE BEGINNING

First, Paul explains that he had the right beginning. He was “circumcised the eighth day” (3:5). No Jew could have a more proper beginning than this. The Mosaic Law required that on the eighth day, a baby boy would be circumcised, which was the cutting of the male foreskin and the sign of the covenant.

This ritual signified that there must come a time in which the heart of the individual must be circumcised as well. There must come the reality when that child is set apart by the Holy Spirit unto God. Circumcision was a religious ritual practiced by Israel with the significance that the heart must be cut by the Word of God. Paul had the sign of the covenant. What a great beginning. Paul’s parents loved him. But no parent’s love is great enough to save that child. We must each personally know the love of Christ. Though Paul had a great beginning, he is lost, lost, lost. Being born in the right home, with a Christian family cannot save anyone.

Perhaps you also had the right beginning. Maybe you were brought to church from the time you were born. Maybe you were sprinkled as an infant. Maybe you were dedicated to the Lord in a special church service. Whatever might have happened to you in your childhood, none of these things can give you a right standing before God.

## IMPRESSIVE NATIONALITY

Second, Paul had the right nationality. He was born “of the nation of Israel” (3:5). Sure, he was born in Tarsus, a Roman city, to Jewish parents who possessed Roman citizenship, but he also had citizenship in the nation of Israel, as a true Hebrew. Israel was God’s chosen nation. God made his covenant with Israel through Abraham and promised that Christ would come through his family. To be a member of Israel was to inherit a great privilege (*cf* Rom 9:4-5). God placed his own presence among them and visited them in a fiery pillar of glory, day and night in the Tabernacle and Temple.

The people of Israel were privileged to receive the Scriptures for the whole world. No other nation had such an advantage through access to the Word of God. God gave his law, he sent his prophets, and he gave his commandments, all to the chosen nation of Israel. Paul was born in the nation that was chosen to guard and keep the Word of God. But that’s not enough.

Our country has so many Bibles. No one in the history of the world has had access to such knowledge of God. But knowledge alone can’t save anyone. It takes a trust, a full surrender to Christ. Paul had not surrendered. He was lost, though he had a fantastic homeland of Israel.

## IMPRESSIVE LINEAGE

Third, Paul testifies that he had the right lineage: he was “of the tribe of Benjamin” (3:5). This was an impressive tribe to be from for a number of reasons. Benjamin was the favorite son of Jacob and Rachel after Joseph was taken to Egypt. Benjamin was also the tribe of the first king, King Saul, after whom Paul was named after. His Jewish name is Saul, and his Hellenistic or Greek name is Paul. So Paul is named after the first king of Israel. Then, of the twelve tribes of Israel, Benjamin was one of the two elite tribes that mostly stayed faithful to the Lord. They were one of the two tribes that remained loyal to

King David's descendants when the kingdom divided; together, they formed the southern kingdom of Judah.

In the land assigned to Benjamin the capital city, Jerusalem, was situated. So, it was in the land assigned to Benjamin that the Temple was built, and the sacrifices were made. Paul was not only an Israelite; he was from an impressive tribe. Many today presume that the spiritual lineage of their family tree will give them a right standing with God.

### IMPRESSIVE UPBRINGING

Fourth, Paul adds that he was "a Hebrew of Hebrews" (3:5). Though Saul born in Tarsus as a Hebrew, but he was raised in the capital city of Israel, in Jerusalem. Paul was not just as a Hebrew, but "a Hebrew of Hebrews" – everyday worshipping at the Temple in Jerusalem. Every day he wasn't just at a synagogue, he was at the Temple.

To be "a Hebrew of Hebrews" means Paul was raised according to strictest Hebrew tradition. He was reared in a Hebrew home and learned the Hebrew language. According to his own testimony (Acts 22:3), Paul would have begun his studies of the Hebrew Scriptures (likely around age 15) in the city of Jerusalem under the greatest Hebrew scholar of his time, the renowned Rabbi Gamaliel.

We find his own testimony in Acts 22:6, "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day." Gamaliel was like the Yoda of rabbis! And Paul was training to be the next great rabbi of national renown. This was a true Hebrew of Hebrews.

Saul was also a member of the elitist of the elite of Hebrews, the Council of the Sanhedrin (See Acts 6:12; cf 6:15; 7:58). The Sanhedrin was *the governing body of 70 elders who ruled the Jews*. When Stephen the first Christian martyr was stoned, they brought him before the Sanhedrin, who charged him guilty, and to be put to death by stoning. Paul was so much "in" in the Sanhedrin, that he was the chief witness who actually held the coats of those who stoned Stephen.

You couldn't get any more Hebrew than Paul was. He was a die-hard Hebrew. He was as religiously a Hebrew as anyone could possibly be.

Maybe you can relate to this. Maybe you also had the right upbringing. Perhaps you were raised in a Christian home and attended a Christian school, and maybe you even learned the truths of the Bible as a young person. While these are all good things, none of them are able to save you. They are worthless if they don't point you to Christ.

### IMPRESSIVE STANDARD

Fifth, Paul had an impressive standard by which he lived. "As to the Law [he was] a Pharisee" (3:5). According to the Jewish historian Josephus, there were about 6,000 Pharisees during the time of Jesus. The term Pharisee meant "separated one". These were the most elite religious Jews. These were the rock stars of the religious world. Paul was one of them.

What does this say about Paul? As a Pharisee he was an expert in the Old Testament Scriptures. Pharisees took the Bible literally. They believed it. They read it. They studied it for hours every day. They taught it. They preached it. They applied it. They enforced it. They were fiercely devoted to upholding the Word of God. Moreover, Pharisees sought to

live the Bible with all their might. So it was with Paul before his conversion; he was a walking, talking storehouse of Bible knowledge. Paul knew the Scriptures inside out.

Maybe you are committed to the teaching of the Bible. Perhaps you know it well. Perhaps you teach it to others, or preach to your church. But even this, while noble and commendable, cannot save you.

### IMPRESSIVE SINCERITY

Sixth, Paul had a powerful passion and sincerity. He adds that he was, “as to zeal, a persecutor of the church” (3:6). Zeal was considered the highest virtue of the Jewish faith. It meant simultaneous love and hate. It meant that you loved God so much that you hated whatever threatened that love. This is a wonderful virtue, but because Paul is a human, his zeal went wrong. Shockingly, all this amazing religion put a twist on the Scriptures that blinded him to the true Savior. Before Christ, Saul loved his Jewish faith so much that he hated the very Jewish Messiah Jesus! How much zeal did Paul have? He tried to kill Christians and succeeded. He says in Acts 22.

...in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in [Christ].<sup>20</sup> And when the blood of Stephen [God’s] witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him (Acts 22:19).

Paul had authority to put people to death because he was an officer of the Sanhedrin, the most powerful governing body of the Jews. He was there as the primary witness at Stephen’s death. Paul was not lukewarm about anything he did, and certainly not about religion. Paul was not apathetic, nor was he a “half in, half out” type of person. He was full of zeal and passion for holy things. He was filled with sincerity, so much so that not only did he love what he believed to be right, but he hated what he was convinced was wrong. From this character came his violent persecution against the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### IMPRESSIVE MORALITY

Seventh, Paul had a high standard of morality. “...as to righteousness under the law, [I was] blameless” (3:6). He wasn’t just concerned about the ten commandments; he was diligent about keeping all 613 laws prescribed in the Levitical law code. He was like the rich young ruler who said, “All these I have kept from my youth up” (Lk 18:21). These laws all pointed to the beauty of Jesus Christ, but Paul was so focused on the law that *he missed Christ*.

Had we been there, we would have stood back and looked at the life of before-conversion Paul, and concluded that here was a straight arrow if there ever was one. He sought to live by the standard of God’s law. He was outwardly moral. He was extremely upright. He was serious as one can be about God’s law. But he was lost. So lost. He was dead in his sins. He “had a form of godliness, but denied it’s power” (2 Tim 3:5).

Perhaps you are like this, too. You are well known as a good man or woman. You take following the Bible’s commands very seriously. But this too will not save you. Paul had all this morality, but Christ got a hold of Paul, he called himself the “chief of sinners” (1 Tim 1:15). Compared to Christ Paul’s righteousness (and our own righteousness) is filthy rags (Isa 64:5).

## *Paul Had Everything But Jesus*

Paul appeared to have everything going for him before conversion. If anyone could have ever earned their way to heaven by their own religiosity, Saul of Tarsus would have been exhibit number one, and at the head of the line. This man who would become the apostle of Christ had an impressive beginning, nationality, lineage, upbringing, standard, sincerity, and morality. But before his conversion he hated Christ, and he killed Christians.

## *Everything Minus Jesus Equals Nothing*

You see, Paul had everything except for one thing. He had everything... except Jesus Christ. Here is the ultimate math equation for your life: everything minus Jesus equals nothing. If a person does not have Christ, they have nothing. Paul had everything except everything that he needed. Everything minus Jesus equals nothing.

How does this first part of Paul's testimony compare to the first part of your testimony? Could it be that you once were lost in religion? Perhaps you were sincere about spiritual things, but sincerely wrong. Could it be that this describes where your life is at this moment? Maybe you are reading this and coming to the realization that you are a religious person but have never been personally converted to Jesus Christ. If so, it is important for you to know where you stand. A right diagnosis, it is said, is half the cure. But it is only half. You need to experience what now follows.

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## **2. COMING TO KNOW CHRIST (3:7-9; ACTS 9:1-5).**

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*The surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...*

Next Paul describes what happened to him at conversion, when he came to know Christ.

...but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (3:7-8).

In one second, Saul of Tarsus was changed. One glimpse of Jesus made him see that everything he used to love and live for was human excrement and worthless compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. Once he met Christ, Paul was never the same again. So before we begin looking at the next verses, we need to see how Paul was introduced to the worth of knowing Christ, so that he was willing to forsake everything for Christ. In coming to know Christ, we know the reach of Christ, the riches of Christ, and the righteousness of Christ.

## **WE KNOW THE REACH OF CHRIST (ACTS 9:1-5)**

Consider the long reach of Christ to bring sinners to himself. Where ever you are, he will find you. The reach of Christ is beyond what we can imagine.

## *The Reach of Christ through the Scriptures*

He leaves the ninety and nine to find the one lost wandering sheep. You remember when he found you? He calls to you:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Mt 11:28).

He's calling you right now. His says to his servants and ambassadors,

Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled (Lk 14:23).

The Bible says God's reach is so long!

God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom 5:9).

...you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off"; 10 fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand (Isa 41:9-10).

He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:9).

Where ever you are, God's reaching for you. He reaches out to rebellious Israel:

I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim [Israel]; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath (Hos 11:9).

Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up (Hos 6:1).

God's reach is so far, he can reach every person.

Jesus was "crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Heb 2:9).

Wouldn't you agree that God has a far reach?

## *The Reach of Christ in Paul's Life*

God's reach is so far that he grabbed the worst self-righteous legalist who was later nicknamed, "The chief of sinners." God has a longest arm in the universe. He'll find you where ever you are. He's after you with his unrelenting love.

Our Lord has a far reach. He's got a long arm. "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" (Jer 32:27). "Is the arm of the Lord too short that it cannot save?" (Num 11:23). God's long arm of love is on full display in Acts 9.

Look over at Acts 9. Here is probably the greatest conversion ever recorded. We see the unrelenting love of God coming after Paul. Look at this. Paul is killing Christians, and the Lord tracks him down, not to destroy him, but to save him. Look at our loving God!

But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest <sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. <sup>4</sup> And falling to the ground, he heard a voice

saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”<sup>5</sup> And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:1-5).

### *A Surprising Love*

What a surprising day it was that Saul of Tarsus was saved. God is going to show his love to a man that hates his dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ. We read in Acts 9:1, “But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord ...” Here we see his zeal as a persecutor of the church. Paul was adamantly opposed to anything that did not adhere to his religious traditions in Judaism. He “went to the high priest<sup>2</sup> and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1-2). The early Christians were referred to as those belonging to the Way, because they walked the narrow path headed to life. They lived according to the word of God in a dark and devilish generation—like stars shining in the dark. But Saul was in the darkness at this point—and so if he found any belonging to the Way, he was determined to “bring them bound to Jerusalem.” He wanted to drag them back and have them stand trial, with the hope of putting them to death. The first Christian martyr, Stephen, had recently been stoned to death, with Saul standing by approvingly (Acts 7–8). Who was to know what Christian would be next? Who could know that Paul would one day become a martyr for Jesus Christ himself?

### *A Flash of Shekinah Glory*

“Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus” (Acts 9:3), about 150 miles north of Jerusalem, when “suddenly a light from heaven shone [flashed] around him.” This light was the Shekinah glory of God—the very presence of the living God—shining brighter than the sun in the sky. Saul woke up that day wanting to persecute the church, and by midday, he was part of that church of Jesus. He woke up a persecutor and went to sleep a precious, adopted child of God!

Every conversion occurs suddenly. Every new birth occurs suddenly. It is not a process over a long period of time. There may be a process that leads up to conversion, but there is a moment, there is a time, when we cross the line; we step out of the world and step into the kingdom of heaven. This event, which we read of in Acts 9, is when Paul entered through the narrow gate leading to life.

### *The Savior’s Question*

This was not only a surprising day, it was a day when Saul met the Savior. Saul fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul.” It was repeated with intensity: “Why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4). The glory of God shines, and we find out who Saul is persecuting: Jesus of Nazareth. To persecute the church is to persecute the Head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus lives in the church as he indwells the true believers of the church. To come against the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to come against Christ himself.

### *A Saving Love*

God’s reach is so far for this self-righteous Pharisee, that in a moment, Saul of Tarsus is converted. This was the day of salvation for Paul. We know because of what Saul called

Jesus. He cried out, “Who are you, Lord?” (Acts 9:5). Paul’s resistance against Jesus Christ was over. The Lord answered: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.” Jesus personally introduced himself to Saul of Tarsus.

God appears to a man named Ananias (*different from the other Ananias from Acts 5*) in a vision and says that Saul of Tarsus “is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

### *A Line of Demarcation*

God’s love transforms us at a point in time. In that moment when he met Jesus, Saul didn’t know his great future. He simply understood that he was face to face with the King of heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ. Instantly, he saw that he had been wrong all of his life. In that moment, Saul was apprehended by God, and he yielded. Immediately, he confessed the lordship of Jesus Christ. He knew he was Lord! Who are you? he asked. But he called him Lord. He knew he was Lord. In that split second, he became a believer in Christ. He laid down his life at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You may not know the very moment you were saved, but there is a line of demarcation in the Christian life. There is a moment when...

...you turned away from idols to serve the living and true God (1 Thess 1:9, NLT).

He... delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son (Col 1:13).

He stepped across the line by faith and became a true follower and disciple. In that instant, Saul was converted by the grace of God.

### *A Love Embraced through Faith*

Saul came “by grace, through faith” (Eph 2:8-9). He saw that he was wrong. He realized he was hateful. And this hateful man embraced the love of God, by grace through faith. Works couldn’t get him anything but filthy rags.

#### *What is Faith?*

What is faith? I’ll tell you it’s not complicated. Jesus said, it’s so simple, that if you come to him, you have to have the faith of a little child. Let me tell you what faith is in a simple way.

Faith is a surrender to the love of God in Christ. It’s a trust and a surrender to the fact that Jesus, in his death, gave himself up willingly for you.

“God so loved [put your name] that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16). That’s faith. Surrender to God’s love. Stop trusting in your own ability to make God love you. You don’t have to fix yourself up first. God already loves you. Surrender to that love, and *he’ll* fix you up.

### **WE KNOW THE RICHES OF CHRIST (3:7-8)**

In coming to know Christ, we know the reach of Christ, but we also know the riches of Christ. Let’s go back to Philippians 3, and realize that something beautiful happened

that day. Paul's day of conversion was also a day of accounting. Paul calculated the worth of knowing Christ. He says, nothing can compare to the worth of knowing Jesus!

### *The Most Important Equation*

The forceful phrase *indeed* (3:8) is an untranslatable string of five Greek particles (lit. "but indeed therefore at least even"). It strongly emphasizes the contrast between the worthless efforts we make to clean ourselves up that do not impress God, compared to the incalculable worth of knowing Christ.<sup>2</sup> Paul is saying, *this equation is important! Paul begins,*

...but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (3:7-8).

Religiously, Paul looked rich, but he was spiritually bankrupt. Knowing Christ is worth losing everything! That's Paul's conclusion.

### *Christ vs. Everything: No Comparison*

Let's consider the comparison: In Christ, I have.... EVERYTHING.

- total righteousness, a perfect record
- adoption into God's family
- abundant life now, eternal life at death

Without Christ, I have... EXCREMENT. "All of the cherished treasures in his gain column suddenly became deficits."<sup>3</sup>

### *Isaiah's Equation of God's Riches*

Paul must have been thinking about what Isaiah said:

But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags... (Isa 64:6a).

I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord (Phil 3:8).

All of those things Paul listed before—self-effort and religion, upbringing and nationality—he used to think they would gain him entrance to heaven. But they were not gain in the eyes of the Almighty. And so, having encountered Jesus, he said, "those things I have counted as loss" (3:7b). They are loss, literally worthless. He says they are rubbish. Literally excrement.

## **WE KNOW THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST (3:9)**

In coming to know Christ, we know the righteousness of Christ. Paul mountain top of joy is found in verse 9: to be found in Christ! And to be found in Christ is to have his perfect righteousness applied to you.

<sup>2</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Philippians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 234.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

...and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (3:9).

### *The Great Exchange*

What an exchange! My rags for his robe of righteousness! How does this happen? It's something that I need to rest in. It's something Christ has already done. It's a righteousness that comes from Christ. It's just like Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21).

### *The Bee Story*

We are righteous in Christ! It reminds me of the little girl who was allergic to bees. One sting of a bee would take her life in less than an hour. One day she was riding in the car along the highway with her daddy. In the car flew an angry bee with a big stinger. The little girl began to panic. She began to wail. Daddy! A bee! Daddy, I could die. Daddy, is that bee going to sting me? Oh Daddy, I'm so afraid! She cried and she wailed. The bee buzzed around the car,

The angry bee harassed the father, and as soon as he could cupped that bee in his hand. He could feel the angry hornet hitting the inside of his hand. He would not stop. And then.... "Ouch!" yelled the father. He felt that stinger in his hand and let the bee go.

The bee flew erratically by that little girl again. She was terrified! The bees gonna get me Daddy!

The father showed black stinger in his hand to his daughter. Sweetheart, that bee cannot hurt you. Soon he'll die. I took the stinger for you.

That's what Christ has done. He's taken the sting of death for you. Paul quotes Hosea 13:14...

O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? (1 Cor 15:55).

The sting of death is defeated! Jesus has taken on our filthy rags and given us his robe of righteousness!

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## **3. GROWING IN CHRIST (3:10-11).**

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*That I may know him...*

We will look at this more in depth in our next study, but I want us to just close by saying: this is the abundant life! This is the way to live! We want to be growing in Christ. We want to be disciple makers.

...that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (3:10-11).

This is our life after coming to know Christ. It is growing in our relationship with the Lord. We are going to have an entire message on this next week, but for now, understand that conversion is just the beginning. We are to be like Paul in 2 Corinthians 3.

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:18).

How do we get there? I want to know Christ better! I want to grow in knowing Christ.

### **10 WAYS TO KNOW CHRIST BETTER...**

We long to know Jesus better. Paul says, “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...” (Phil 3:10). God says, “Draw near to me and I will draw near to you” (Jas 4:8). How can we draw near to our precious Lord?

1. **Come with total surrender to Christ’s love.** This is another way of expressing true faith in Christ. Faith is a radical surrender of all you are and all you have to the love of Christ. This is the first baby step. Faith is not a work. You simply give your life unconditionally to God to love you. Do that now.
2. **Come to God’s Word hungry.** God is ready to satisfy you and renew your mind. Psalm 1:2-3 says growth comes through the slow meditation and consideration of God’s Word. The Bible is a book of God’s love on every page (that’s why it’s called ‘good news’). Experiencing God’s love is the key to joy and growth. Take it slowly. You are probably more wounded than you care to admit. You can’t feed a steak to a person in the ICU. Let God heal you through knowing Christ.
3. **Come to Jesus needy.** Remember intimacy is more than knowledge. There are many who “worship what they do not know” (Jn 4:22). Never in the history of the Christian church has so much theological knowledge been available to so many people as it is today. You can have an encyclopedic knowledge of Scripture and miss Jesus (Jn 5:39–40). Biblical knowledge that actually *drives us to trust* in Christ is better than the finest gold (Ps 19:10). Knowing Christ better means being vulnerable, humble and honest when we come to the Word. Assume you are not righteous in yourself. Come in need of the Physician to heal you.
4. **Find his wholeness in your brokenness.** Every kind of brokenness you experience can lead to a corresponding blessing if you’re willing to die to your own: will, goals, dreams, desires, expectations, plans, rights, and reputation. If you choose to die to yourself, God will pour out blessings like a character that reflects His own, a witness that leads to other people’s lives being transformed, and rewards from God himself.
5. **Find his nearness in your loneliness.** No one understands your struggles more than Jesus. He “tasted death for every man” (Heb 2:9). This is the ultimate expression of love. Jesus gave all that he had (which is everything) to know you intimately.
6. **Come ready for radical sacrifice.** Knowing such a loving Savior demands sacrifice. All should know his love. All should be sacrificed so that the whole world may know. Sacrifice all for knowing him and sharing him with others.
7. **Come ready for joyful holiness.** Knowing Christ means union with him in death and resurrection. You have to die to anything that is unholy. God’s glory is pure, sincere, good, and holy. It is love and kindness. It is totally selfless. Holiness

is doing everything for the glory of God. You are chosen, separated and called for the God's glory. Cut off all that does not honor him.

8. **Stand for Christ, and stand alone if you must.** Be willing to stand out and speak up for Jesus in all areas of your life, and with whoever you meet. Take a strong public stand for the uniqueness of who Jesus is; for the truth of the entire Bible; and for the necessity of living a life of integrity, purity, and humility in order to please God.
9. **Seek him, find him, and praise him for answered prayer (Mt 7:7).** We serve a God who moves mountains. Our great God woke up balancing the 200 billion galaxies that contain 200 million stars each. That's just an estimate. He did that before you ate breakfast. Praise him! Watch him work. He has unlimited resources.
10. **Live moment by moment, looking to Jesus.** Bring Jesus home. Don't just be a Sunday Christian. Don't just be a Christian when you are in public or in church. Live honorably and walk humbly at home. Lay your life down for those closest to you at home first. Live a life of integrity in your private life. Let Jesus by his Spirit fill you in your free hours.

Jesus stand ready to help you come closer. He says,

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Mt 11:28-30).

### Conclusion

In Christ alone we stand. Not in any righteousness of our own. Christ is so merciful to reach us. What a testimony you have if you know Christ! The more you draw near to Christ, the more you are going to want to tell others. I hope God is forming your Discipleship Groups of 2 or 3 others that you can shine your light with. I pray as you draw near to Christ, both individually and together, that the light of Christ will shine and you will "make disciples of all nations" teaching all people about the love of God seen in Jesus Christ. Isn't he wonderful?

When I was a kid, I worked as a cook at Ponderosa Steakhouse. I hardly knew the Bible because I was a brand-new Christian. One thing I did know was the Roman's Road: a list of verses through Romans that clearly explained the Gospel. Though I knew very little, every time I was on break, I shared what little I knew. I would sit down at the break table and open my Bible. Almost every single time, I had someone sit down across from me and ask me, "What are you reading?" I didn't know much, but I shared with them what I knew. I knew how someone could come to Christ. I pointed every single worker and manager to Jesus Christ in that restaurant, though I knew very little. If you know the Gospel (*Jesus died for my sins*), then you know enough to tell someone. "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15, KJV).