

Attaining the Resurrection

Philippians 3:1-11

I grew up next to a boy named Brian who was about my same age. From the time we were three or four we did everything together. Explored the woods, seined the stream for minnows and crawdads, rode mini-bikes, played basketball and kick the can, threw apples at each other, knocked down wasp nests, wrestled, caught snakes . . . and we talked about many things related to life, God and family.

Both of us were raised in Christian homes and we both were really proud of our dads. So when we were about 6 years old, I took great offense when Brian said, *"My dad could whip your dad."*

"No, he could not!"

"Yes, he could."

"No, he couldn't"

Back and forth we went arguing over whose dad would win in a fight. I remember not only defending my dad's honor, but doing so with the utmost confidence that my dad would indeed whip Brian's dad in a fight.

However, looking back, I think my confidence might have been misplaced. My dad was neither a muscle man, nor a brawler. His job required him to use his brain inside the office of a savings and loan. Brian's dad on the other hand worked in construction. He was naturally muscled and strengthened his body each day on his job.

Now, I am glad I had such high esteem for my dad. My misplaced confidence in his brawn did no harm.

But sometimes misplaced confidence can be catastrophic.

Misplaced confidence in a faulty airplane can lead to a fiery crash.

Misplaced confidence in a drunken surgeon can lead to death.

Misplaced confidence in a weak Savior . . . a false Gospel will lead a person to hell.

In relationship to your eternal future, I ask you to think this morning, "Where have I placed my confidence?"

Central Idea: A Christian is one who puts all his/her confidence in the resurrected Lord Jesus. Christians long to know Jesus and to experience the power of His resurrection. We look to Jesus for new life now and resurrection for our future.

The Futility of False Confidence: Admitting our inability to reverse the curse.

Why is life so hard? Why does fear grip us so often? Why do we worry about tomorrow? These are questions that most of us wrestle with and thankfully God has given us the answer to them.

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—” (Romans 5:12 [ESV](#))

Why is life so hard? God answers, “Because sin entered the world and death fell upon us through sin.”

Why does fear grip us so often? God answers, “Because sin entered the world and death fell upon us through sin.”

Why do we worry about tomorrow? God answers, “Because sin entered the world and death fell upon us through sin.”

Truth: Every evil thing . . . every despairing thing . . . every suffering thing that we experience in our lives and in the world has one source . . . sin. God in His goodness is not the source of these terrible realities. Sin is the fountainhead of all man’s troubles. We are the source of our own sadnesses.

The question that follows this realization then is, *“How can I become free from evil, from despair, from suffering?”*

Some say, *“Well, you just have to make the most of this world. Yes, this place is broken, but there are pleasures here too . . . so eat, drink and be merry while you can, for tomorrow you die.”*

Greek historian Herodotus from 2500 years ago tells about an Egyptian custom, *“In social meetings among the rich, when banquet ended, a servant would often carry a coffin to show the guests. In the coffin a wooden image of a corpse was carved and painted to resemble a dead person. The servant would show it to the guests and say, “Gaze here and drink and be merry for when you die such you shall be.”*

The message is simply, “Have as much fun as you can now because there is no future for us.” At least the Egyptians were being honest about their choice of escape. They acknowledged that their choice was only a temporary solve. The

more modern version of this is simply, “Party hard now!” With no mention of death to come. That version is less honest.

Others approach this human problem with self-help. Often we decide we can amend our fears and frailty by making more of an effort.

Many think, *“Maybe we can overcome this big problem of death by being really, really good or really really smart or really really spiritual. Maybe we can find the answers our own answers to defeat death and despair.”*

Let us listen to God teach us about the idea that we can somehow overcome our own problems.

“Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.”
(Philippians 3:2 [ESV](#))

Notice that God says THREE TIMES: **Look out! Look out! Look out!**

What is God warning us to look out for? Answer: Teachers who urge us to believe in ourselves and to make effort in order to find life.

In Philippi, some religious leaders were teaching that we should try harder to obey God’s Law and if we tried harder to live by a certain standard, then our problems would diminish or perhaps even disappear. The Holy Spirit through Paul calls these teachers “dogs” and “evil doers”.

Paul goes on to urge us NOT TO PUT EVEN ONE SMALL BIT OF CONFIDENCE IN OUR OWN EFFORTS.

Truth: We need rescue and any confidence we place in our self will keep us from God’s rescue.

*“For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and **put no confidence in the flesh**—”* (Philippians 3:3 [ESV](#))

Paul knows that some of these false teachers are going to say, *“Hey, only losers put no confidence in the flesh. You don’t believe in yourself because you are too weak to make the cut.”* Paul says, “No. I do not reject self-help because I am bad at it. I reject self-help because I was really good at it. And that kind of confidence

completely fails.”

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: 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; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.” (Philippians 3:4-6 [ESV](#))

Paul asserts that IF ANYONE had reason to put any confidence in their ability to overcome the sin and death problem, then it would be him. He had the right pedigree; he had the right education; he was in the best religious group; he had passion about his convictions; he put in the maximum effort; by everything that people could see, he excelled in keeping the Law.

YET . . . Paul says, “I was empty. None of that did anything to solve my problem.”

How much confidence should you place in your own ability to become whole, to have joy, to secure your eternal future, to have a healthy soul? Answer: NO CONFIDENCE!

This is opposite of what the world will teach you. It is the opposite of what many Christians will teach you. But it is God’s truth.

The first step we take toward a life worth living is the admission that our believe in ourself is the problem and not the solution. So if we remove SELF from our confidence, what do we replace SELF with?

The Futility of False Confidence: Admitting our inability to reverse the curse.

The Joy of Gospel Confidence: Knowing Jesus, the resurrected Messiah.

But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 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” (Philippians 3:7-8 [ESV](#))

Friends, we need Jesus.

We need His death to remove the curse that sin placed upon our lives.

We need His resurrection to give us power to live new lives.

We need His victory to defeat Satan’s assault against our soul.

We need His future reign to guarantee us that the end of our story is glory!

Whatever we USED to think was important for us to flourish in our lives . . .
 whatever we USED to think would secure a future for us . . .
 whatever we USED to think would be the answer to our sorrows and pain . . .
 we count ALL THOSE FORMER SOLUTIONS to be NOTHING!

Those former solutions might be our money . . . they might be our pleasures . . . they might be our righteous deeds . . . they might be our religious practices . . . they might be our human relationships. Whatever I USED to place confidence in to provide me with life, I throw them away so that I can cling to Jesus.

Illustration: If I gave you a choice to walk out of here with one of two gifts: One was a 50-pound gold bar. That gold bar is worth over \$3.5 million dollars today. OR I would give you a \$25 life jacket. Which would you choose?

OK. Now let us sail out in a boat 100 miles from shore. And our boat begins to sink. No emergency calls. You know that if you survive, it will likely be after a long long time in the water. And I offer you the same choice. If you are wise, you will toss the gold bar to the bottom of the sea as possessing no more value than garbage/rubbish. You cling in faith to that life raft because everything in your physical life depends on that.

Every Christians testimony is the same: *“What I used to consider really really valuable, I now consider as LOSS. And now I consider knowing Jesus to be everything to me.”*

Friends, Jesus is the Resurrected Savior! Before Paul meets Jesus on the road to Jesus is nothing and his own efforts to obey the Law are everything. AFTER Paul meets Jesus, everything is flipped upside down. **That is what knowing the value of Jesus will do. Knowing Jesus flips all our values upside down.**

Here we learn that knowing Christ is a **“surpassing value”**. . . so valuable that nothing can be compared to it. Think of that!

What do you have that is so valuable that nothing can be compared to its worth. Perhaps it is your health. Perhaps it is a relationship. Perhaps it is some prized possession. Paul says, “For me, this is the treasure of knowing Christ.”

Why do some Christians keep dabbling in sin and the world? Answer: They forget how valuable knowing Jesus is!

Why do some Christians go back to works righteousness? Answer: They forget

how valuable knowing Jesus is!

The word **knowing** means to know “experientially by personal involvement.” This is not a cold, doctrinal knowledge, but is a relational intimacy with Jesus. It is a **personal closeness and relational experience**. It is a **deepening conversation** with and **joyful discovery** of His divine Person.

Truth: Knowing Jesus in our personal experience is the CENTER of Christianity.

Christianity is not about living by certain morals, or singing certain songs, or reciting certain prayers or believing in certain doctrines or attending certain services. At the center, Christianity is knowing Christ in personal relationship like we know a best friend.

Knowing Jesus means that we draw near to Him in our sorrows.

Knowing Jesus means that we talk with Him when we do not know what to do.

Knowing Jesus means that we listen as He speaks promises to us in our despair.

Knowing Jesus means that we have light even when darkness descends upon us.

Knowing Jesus means that we are never ever alone.

Knowing Jesus means that we find Him more and more lovely every day.

Knowing Jesus means that we hear Him convicts us when we go astray.

Knowing Jesus means that we weep in His arms when our heart is broken.

Knowing Jesus means that we forever learn more of His infinite qualities.

Knowing Jesus means that we sing His praises even in trials.

Knowing Jesus means that we daily experience His eternal, unfading love.

We are moved to know Jesus not out of rigid discipline or cold obligation. We are moved to know Jesus **because knowing Him possesses “surpassing value”**.

In John 17:3 Jesus defined eternal life as knowing Him: **“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”**

First Question: Do you know Jesus?

Second Question: Do you want to know Him more?

*8 I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, **in order that I may gain Christ**
9 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—**10 that**
I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like*

him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”
(Philippians 3:8-11 [ESV](#))

Question: Does not Paul already KNOW Jesus the Messiah? Yes and no. Husbands, do you know your wives? Yes and no. Yes, you have experiential, personal knowledge of your wife. But, no, you are just at the beginning of knowing her! **A good relationship is one that never loses the excitement of wonder in knowing more and more.**

Paul is saying that he does know Jesus, but that he wants to know Jesus more and more deeply. **This is the driving ambition of His life. It trumps every other goal. He is willing to pay any price to obtain it!**

I love what one pastor F B Meyer writes about this:

To know Christ in the storm of battle; to know Him in the valley of shadow; to know Him when the solar light irradiates our faces, or when they are darkened with disappointment and sorrow; to know the sweetness of His dealing with bruised reeds and smoking flax; to know the tenderness of His sympathy and the strength of His right hand—all this involves many varieties of experience on our part, but each of them like the facets of a diamond will reflect the prismatic beauty of His glory from a new angle. (The Epistle to the Philippians [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952], 162–63). F B Meyer

Jesus offers Himself to us. Let us empty our hands in order to grab hold of Him by faith. Jesus is too valuable to lose!

When we pray for revival in our own hearts, we are praying for this one passion to override every other desire.

When we pray for revival in our church, we are praying that we as a church family would desire this one thing more than we desire anything else.

When we pray for revival for our country, we are praying that our leaders and our people would fall on their faces and cry out, “Jesus Messiah, we want to know You!”

Have you yet come to the decision that Jesus is worth dropping everything that you hold dear in order to know Him?

In 1995, Graham Kendrick wrote a worship song about this verse called “Knowing You Jesus”

All I once held dear, built my life upon
 All this world reveres, and wars to own
 All I once thought gain I have counted loss
 Spent and worthless now, compared to this
 Knowing You, Jesus
 Knowing You
 There is no greater thing
 You're my all, You're the best
 You're my joy, my righteousness
 And I love You, Lord

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*that I may know him **and the power of his resurrection**, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”*
(Philippians 3:10-11 [ESV](#))

To know the power of His resurrection means that we live in freedom from our slavery to sin. Knowing the resurrected Jesus gives us the power to say “No” to sin and to our worldly passions.

When one of my sons was around 8 years old, he had a big problem with anger. I would discipline him for it. I would talk with him about it. I would pray with him about it. But he was not changing. His anger problem was growing bigger and bigger. One day we were talking together about this and his little heart was so tender. **He looked at me with tears in his eyes and he said, “Daddy, I do not want to be angry, but I do not know how.”**

Is not that the great problem that many of us face. We think, “I do not want to abuse alcohol, but I do not know how.” “I do not want to be bitter toward the one who hurt me, but I do not know how.” “I do not want to look at those sensual images, but I do not know how.” “I do not want to covet what other people have, but I do not know how.” “I do not want to speak harsh words, but I do not know how.” “I do not want to lie, but I do not know how.”

Here is what Paul is saying, *“I know that the resurrected Jesus is the One who frees me from sin and death. I want to know/experience His resurrection power so that I can live for the glory of God. I want to know/experience His resurrection power so that I can be free of the sins that corrupt my soul. I want to know/experience His resurrection power so that I can live with joy and not with sorrow.”*

We will never be free of our sin by chastening ourselves or striving more in our own strength. We need the power of His resurrection to be at work in us.

How can we experience His resurrection power to live a life worthy of Him?
Answer . . .

*Phil 3:13-14 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But **one thing I do:** forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, **I press on toward the goal** for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

God made Paul and “One Thing” man. And it is this one thing that caused Paul to “press on toward the goal”!

To “press on” means that we give our focus to, that we apply our energy to, that we strain forward to, that we persevere to. While knowing Jesus more and more is a gift from God, we are not passive in this process.

Friends, do you desire to know the power of Jesus’ resurrection in your life? Can you say with me, “Yes, I do.”

Then let us press on in faith! Let us set aside every other thing of value and grasp Jesus by faith. Let Him be our ONE THING!

Let us not content ourselves with 5 minutes of Bible and 60 minutes of news each morning.

Let us not invest 5 minutes in prayer and two hours in a basketball game.

Let us not devote 5 minutes a day to praise and 12 hours to grumbling.

Let us not devote 5 minutes a day to family worship and 12 hours to conversation that does not include Him at all.

Let us not devote 5 minutes to Gospel conversations with Christian friends and then 2 hours to political or social or sports conversations.

Let us not devote 5 minutes to the teaching of the word and two hours to a podcast of someone who does not know God.

Let us not devote 5 minutes a day to confession of our sin and 12 hours to complaining about others sins.

Let us not devote 5 minutes a day to loving our brothers and sisters and 12 hours nursing our hurts.

If our mind is set on earthy things, how will we ever know the power of Jesus' resurrection?

Friends, if knowing Jesus is your ONE THING, our daily use of our time will change. Devoting a spoonful of our time to knowing Him will not grow us in this direction. If we long to KNOW JESUS and the POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION, let us give our time and our energy and our focus to this ONE THING.

*that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and **may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death**, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."*
(Philippians 3:10-11 [ESV](#))

Yes, there is a death we must die if we are to experience the power of His resurrection in our lives. Death always precedes resurrection. And there will be suffering as we die to self. But my, what power and joy follows this death!

What does this mean, *"that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.*

Paul is pushing our minds to a future day when this body of ours dies. Look at your body and say to yourself, "My body is dying." That is true for each of us. Some of you are struggling right now with diseases that threaten your physical life. We are right to pray for healing and to trust God for healing. (Ask the elders to pray over you!). Yet we KNOW that our bodies will one day die. What then?

Paul says, "I want my body to experience the resurrection that Jesus' body experienced on that first Easter morning. I want that."

How do we gain confidence that we will experience that bodily resurrection?
Answer: By KNOWING THE RESURRECTED LORD JESUS!

Truth: Jesus' past resurrection guarantees our future resurrection.

I have seen many believers leave this world through death. I have talked with many just as they are at the door of eternity. Some have great confidence in the

future resurrection. Some do not. But every believer desires this confidence.
How might we be confident when death knocks on our body?

Paul points us to the answer: The more we KNOW JESUS the more we will have confidence in our future resurrection. The hope of our resurrection rests in Jesus' accomplishment and not ours. We have no power to raise our bodies from the dead. But Jesus does. **The more we know Him the more confident we are about our future.**

Truth: We come to know Jesus by an act of faith. We come to know Him more and more by a life of faith.

What does our personal knowledge of Jesus bring to us?

Our knowledge of Jesus brings us His perfect righteousness.
 Our knowledge of Jesus brings us freedom from God's future judgment.
 Our knowledge of Jesus brings us the right to be called God's children.
 Our knowledge of Jesus brings us the power to live more like Jesus.
 Our knowledge of Jesus brings us the sufferings of Jesus.
 Our knowledge of Jesus brings us the future glory of Jesus.
 Our knowledge of Jesus brings us the resurrection of our body.

*But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will **transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body**, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself." (Philippians 3:20-21 [ESV](#))*

The resurrection of our body will happen on the day that Jesus returns in the clouds for His own. The dead who are in Christ will rise first with their new bodies. And then those who are alive at that time will receive their new bodies and rise from this earth to meet the Lord in the air. THEN together, we will be with the LORD JESUS FOREVER.

For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep . . . For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18 [ESV](#))

Truth: Jesus' resurrection guarantees ours.

*"I still can hardly believe it. I, with shriveled, bent fingers, atrophied muscles, gnarled knees, and no feeling from the shoulders down, will one day have a new body, light, bright, and clothed in righteousness—powerful and dazzling. Can you imagine the hope this gives someone spinal-cord injured like me? Or someone who is cerebral palsied, brain-injured, or who has multiple sclerosis? Imagine the hope this gives someone who is manic-depressive. No other religion, no other philosophy promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. **Only in the Gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope.**" Joni Eareckson Tada*

Friend, if you believe in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, Death never speaks the last word over you. LISTEN to what Jesus claims about Himself and about the way for us to be rescued from death's dark destruction.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"
(John 11:25-26 [ESV](#))

Knowing Jesus gives hope in the face of death!

D.L. Moody tells the story of a soldier who was shot and then was able to crawl back to his tent. When he was later found, he was lying face-down, his Bible open and his hand stuck by blood to one of the pages. *Then his hand was lifted, the verse his fingers rested upon was John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, yet shall he live."* Moody responded, ***"I want a religion like that, which can comfort even in death and can unite me with my loved ones. What gloom and darkness would settle upon this world were it not for the glorious doctrine of the resurrection!"***

Conclusion:

"Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you." (Philippians 3:1 [ESV](#))

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." (Philippians 4:4 [ESV](#))

As Paul summarizes the message of this letter, he says, "Believers, always rejoice in Jesus. Never stop rejoicing in Jesus' person and work. Do not let your heart get distracted from the healing balm of joy in Christ."

Friends, I urge you toward joy. The opposites of joy in the Lord are worry, grumbling, complaining, disputing and frustration.

When the world crumbles around you, "Rejoice".

When trials bash into your quiet life, "Rejoice".

When political leaders disappoint you, "Rejoice."

When the economy turns downward, "Rejoice."

When a friend betrays you, "Rejoice."

When Satan assaults you with discouragement, "Rejoice."

Why? Why would we rejoice when there is so much in our lives that are so very hard? Answer: Jesus died and rose again! His resurrection is ours!

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