

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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OF THE
KNOWLEDGE
OF CHRIST

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Living Stream Ministry
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THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: [Phil. 3:5-8](#)

In [Philippians 3:8](#) Paul says, “I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” In this booklet we shall consider the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE LAW AND CHRIST

As Paul was writing [3:5-8](#), he was no doubt mindful of the contrast between the law and Christ. Paul had much experience both with Christ and with the law. Through his experience, he gained a full knowledge both of Christ and of the law.

The law and Christ are two major factors in the composition of the Bible. In a sense, the Old Testament is composed mainly with the law as a basic factor. It may be regarded as a book of the law. The New Testament, on the contrary, is composed with Christ as the basic and governing

factor. Hence, the Old Testament is based on the law, and the New Testament is based on Christ.

Paul was very knowledgeable concerning both the law and Christ. Through his years in Judaism, he gained a detailed knowledge of the law. His knowledge was not that of an outsider, but of a very zealous insider. But by the time Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he had been transferred out from under the law into Christ. Furthermore, he had both the knowledge and the experience of the wonderful, all-inclusive, and extensive Person of Christ. Paul lived in this Person and could therefore speak of himself as a man in Christ ([2 Cor. 12:2](#)).

The phrase “as to” which may also be rendered “according to,” is used three times in [verses 5 and 6](#), referring to the law, zeal, and righteousness. The phrase “on account of,” which may also be rendered “because of,” is also used three times, in [verses 7 and 8](#), referring to Christ, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and Christ again. Christ stands in contrast to the law, the zeal for it, and the righteousness in it. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ and Christ Himself are in contrast to all other things, including the law. On account of Christ and the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Paul gave

up the law, his zeal for it, the righteousness in it, and all other things. This indicates that Christ and the excellency of the knowledge of Him are far superior to the law and all other things.

According to [verse 8](#), Paul not only counted all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and suffered the loss of all things, but he actually counted them to be refuse. The Greek word for refuse denotes dregs, rubbish, filth, what is thrown to the dogs; hence, dog food, dung. There is no comparison between such things and Christ.

It is important to realize that in [3:8](#) Paul does not speak of the excellency of Christ, but of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Many readers of Philippians take the word excellency to refer not to the knowledge of Christ, but to Christ Himself. However, Paul specifically and definitely speaks of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Paul's knowledge of Christ was excellent. On account of the excellency of this knowledge, he was willing to suffer the loss of all things.

In [verse 7](#) Paul says “on account of Christ,” but in [verse 8](#) he goes further and says “on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” The addition of the words

“my Lord” indicates that as Paul was writing, he was filled with intimate, tender feelings concerning Christ. Tender feelings concerning the preciousness of the Lord Jesus rose up within him, causing him to speak of “Christ Jesus my Lord.” Paul placed great value on the excellency of the knowledge of his dear Lord Jesus Christ.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is derived from the excellency of His Person. The Jews consider the law of God given through Moses the most excellent thing in history. Hence, they are zealous for the law. Paul participated in that zeal. But when Christ was revealed to him by God ([Gal. 1:15-16](#)), he saw that the excellency, the supereminence, the supreme preciousness, the surpassing worth, of Christ far exceeded the excellency of the law. His knowledge of Christ issued in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. On account of this, not only did he count the law and the religion founded on the law to be loss, but he counted all things loss.

Here Paul speaks not directly of the excellency of Christ, but of the excellency of knowing Christ. The knowledge in [3:8](#) is not the

knowledge that belongs to Christ, the knowledge that Christ Himself has; it is our subjective knowing of Christ. To you, which is more excellent—the Person of Christ or your knowing Christ? According to doctrine or opinion, you may say that the Person of Christ is more excellent than the knowledge of Christ. However, Paul, speaking from his experience, could say that it is the knowledge of Christ which is more excellent.

We have pointed out that the excellency of the knowledge of Christ is derived from the excellency of His Person. There can be no doubt that in Himself Christ is excellent. But if we do not have the knowledge of Christ, how shall we know His excellency? If we lack the knowledge of Christ's excellency, His excellency will not mean anything to us.

Before Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, he did not have any knowledge of Christ. He treasured the law and regarded it as most excellent. Paul's zeal for the law was a sign of his appreciation of the law. His zeal came out of his appreciation. Paul certainly was proud of his excellent knowledge of the law. Even though Christ is infinitely more excellent than the law, Paul did not have the knowledge

of Christ. But at the time of his conversion, this excellent One was revealed to him. With this revelation of Christ, Paul began to have the knowledge of Christ. After he began to acquire the knowledge of Christ, Paul came to realize that the knowledge of the law received through Gamaliel was far inferior to the knowledge of Christ. Conscious of this comparison as he was writing [3:5-8](#), Paul could speak of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ and of suffering the loss of all things for the excellency of this knowledge.

To be sure, the excellency is in the very Person of Christ. But for our experience, our realization of this excellency depends on our knowledge. If we lack knowledge, there is simply no way for us to realize that this Person is so excellent. Only when we come to know His excellency do we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. How precious is this excellency of the knowledge of Christ!

THE ALL-INCLUSIVENESS OF CHRIST

In the four books that make up the heart of the divine revelation—Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—Paul opens the veil to show us who Christ is and what Christ is.

Christ is all-inclusive and all-extensive, the reality of every positive thing in the universe. He is the reality of God, man, eternity, light, and life. We simply do not have adequate words to declare who and what Christ is. Perhaps you have known only that Christ is the Son of God sent by the Father in His mercy to die on the cross for the salvation of sinners. You have known that He was born of a virgin, that He died on the cross, that He was raised from among the dead, and that He was exalted to the heavens. You believed in Him as your dear Redeemer and precious Savior, and in this way you were saved. Then you realized that you need Him to help you live in such a way as to glorify the Father. It is good to know Christ in this way, but this knowledge of Him is far too limited.

Forty-eight years ago, I also had such a limited knowledge of Christ. But beginning in 1932 the Lord has gradually been opening the veil that I may have a fuller knowledge of Him. Little by little, the veil has been taken away.

Only recently have I been impressed with the extensiveness of Christ. One day as I was speaking on the Christ revealed in Colossians, I spontaneously used the term extensive and pointed out that the revelation in Colossians concerning

Christ is extensive, even all-extensive, for Christ is more extensive than the whole universe. He is immeasurable, limitless. Hence, He is not only all-inclusive, but also all-extensive.

According to the Bible, Christ truly is all-inclusive. In 1932 I first began to see the all-inclusiveness of Christ and to minister along this line. Although Christ's all-inclusiveness is clearly revealed in the Bible, many believers are greatly surprised when they hear us speak of it.

[Colossians 2:16 and 17](#) say, “Let no one therefore judge you in eating and in drinking or in respect of a feast or of a new moon or of Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.” These verses indicate that Christ is our eating, drinking, feast, new moon, and Sabbath. He is the body, the reality, the substance, of all the positive things in the universe. He is the reality of the air we breathe, of the food we eat, and of the sunshine we enjoy. Furthermore, He is the reality of both the Triune God and of man.

When we teach that Christ is all-inclusive, the reality of all positive things in the universe, some go so far as to accuse us of teaching pantheism. They accuse us of identifying God with the material creation. We utterly repudiate

pantheism and declare that it is a devilish teaching. We do not preach pantheism in any way. However, according to the Bible, we do teach that Christ is God, man, and the reality of all positive things. But this does not mean that the material things in the universe are God Himself. We are not God and we never shall become God. Nevertheless, Christ is in us and, in a very real sense, He is even becoming us. [Colossians 3:10 and 11](#) say, “And having put on the new man, which is being renewed unto full knowledge according to the image of Him Who created him; where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free-man, but Christ is all and in all.” These verses also point to the all-inclusiveness of Christ. In the new man, the Body, the church, there cannot be Greek and Jew. Likewise, there cannot be Chinese and American, German and French. In the new man Christ is all and in all. He is all the members and in all the members. This means that in the new man Christ is you and Christ is me. He truly is all-inclusive and all-extensive.

THE EXCELLENT KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

When Paul was still in Judaism, he was blind

to the all-inclusive Christ. Christ existed as the all-extensive One, but Paul was totally ignorant of Him. At that time, Paul had a thorough and excellent knowledge of the law. But one day, as he was on the road to Damascus, Christ appeared to him, called to him, and said, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” ([Acts 9:4](#)). Although Paul did not know Christ and was blind to Christ, he was nevertheless persecuting Him. After the Lord was revealed to him and he was converted, scales fell from his eyes. His eyes having been opened, he began to see Christ and to know Him. The more he saw Christ, the more he received the knowledge of Him. This is the reason he speaks in [Philippians 3:8](#) of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.

There surely is such a thing as the excellency of knowing Christ. If you testify that Christ is excellent but do so without having the knowledge of Him, you will be speaking merely according to tradition. Actually your word will be uttered in ignorance. You will be speaking something you do not know, because you yourself have not received the excellent knowledge concerning Christ. Unless we have the excellent knowledge of Christ, we cannot say that Christ is excellent. We urgently need the excellent

knowledge of Christ. Paul was so desperate to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ that he was willing to count all things loss on account of this knowledge.

Gaining the excellency of the knowledge of Christ may be illustrated by the experience of tourists shopping in Hong Kong. The merchants there know how to display their products, especially jade, in a way to make them very attractive to tourists. Often when tourists see precious items on display, they become excited. Furthermore, they acquire a knowledge of the excellency of these things. Before they entered the store, they did not know anything of the excellency of these precious items. But once they saw them and gained the excellency of the knowledge concerning them, they were willing to pay the price to possess them. In like manner, we need a revelation of Christ's excellency, of His supreme preciousness.

My burden is not related to doctrine; my burden is that we see a vision and receive a revelation of the excellency of Christ. If we have a revelation of Christ's excellency, we shall automatically have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is

in 3:8, whereas the actual experience of Christ is in 3:10. The knowledge of Christ, however, is basic. By knowledge we actually mean a revelation, a vision, concerning Christ and His excellence. When Paul was blind and in religion, he could not see Christ; he could see only the law. Thus, he had the excellency of the knowledge of the law. But after Christ was revealed to him, he began to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He was captured by the excellency of knowing Christ, and for the sake of this knowledge, he was willing to drop all things and count them to be loss.

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