

That I May Know Him

We are so grateful to gather together here in the name of our Lord Jesus. And it is to the praise of the Lord that we can gather here in Vancouver. We have been gathered by the Lord for a calling. There is a calling from the Lord: You are My witnesses. My particular portion is to share from Paul's testimony of Jesus. And we find his personal testimony given in Philippians chapter 3.

Philippians 3:7 – 14 But what things were gain to me these things I count, on account of Christ, loss. But surely I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ; and that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness, which would be on the principle of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God through faith, to know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, if any way I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead. Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count to have gotten possession myself; but one thing – forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus.

Isaiah 43: 10 – 11 You are My witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am HE: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, I am Jehovah; and besides me there is no savior.

Our Father, we come to You tonight and we come in the name of the Lord Jesus, the faithful and true witness. We know that the Holy Spirit has been given to us to bear witness of Christ. We pray that we will focus our eyes upon our Lord Jesus tonight. That You may remove the distractions as we gather together tonight. We come to say as apostle Paul did, we want to know Christ. We have confidence that the Holy Spirit will strengthen our weakness and quicken our body to be attentive as we gather tonight. And now we cast ourselves in complete dependence upon You tonight. We thank You that You are among us. We pray with faith in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

We have been gathered to this calling: You are my witnesses. There is something we should say at the beginning for this saying 'you are my witnesses'. If He has gathered us and declared us as witnesses, that means He is already here. He is already doing something. And He wants us simply to bear witness of what He is doing.

We have read a few verses from Isaiah. He was prophesying about Israel who would come back from captivity. And because they forsook all of the idols in captivity, now they could be witnesses of the one true God. When you read the whole chapter, you can see that God was gathering all the nations of the world together. And they were gathered together to prove whether there is any other God besides Jehovah. In the court room, God Himself spoke first. He said, 'I alone am God. Is there any other God besides Me? I am He, the only God. There is no other God who can save but Me. That is who I am and you are my witnesses'.

Do you believe that? Israel was to be the witness of this one God. But we know that Israel's testimony began to fade. This witness of this Jehovah was growing dark. And then Jesus, the servant of the Lord came. He fulfilled this role of witness for Jehovah God. He was the faithful and true witness. When He saw God did something, He witnessed to it. When we come to the Book of Acts, we see Jesus again gathering some men together. He told his disciples, 'You are to be my witnesses. But wait until the Holy Spirit comes upon you for power. And when you are there witnessing for me, the Holy Spirit also will bear witness'.

On the day of the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them. They began to go out and to witness in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and to other parts of the world. The apostle Paul was saved in part by the witness of Stephen the martyr. As Stephen bore faithful witness as to who Jesus was, the people came upon him and stoned him to death. Saul was in their midst. Saul began to persecute the church but he could not escape the faithful witness of Stephen. Then the Lord Jesus met the apostle Paul on the road to Damascus. And what did the Lord say to him? After He revealed that He was Jesus, we found recorded in Acts 26:16 that the Lord called the apostle Paul to be a witness. The Lord said, 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you'. We know from the Scripture that when Paul was given the opportunity to witness for Jesus, he spoke of the Jesus he met on the road to Damascus. His witness was powerful. But all he did was that he spoke of what he had seen and heard. And we see that Jesus said he would be the witness also to the things that he would see after his experience on the road to Damascus.

And we thank God that through the letters that Paul wrote we can see that more and more he understood who Jesus was. When Paul was thrown in prison in Rome, we know he wrote Philippians, Ephesians and Colossians at the same time. These three prison epistles are tremendous revelation of Christ. In Ephesians we see the revelation that Jesus is the center of God's eternal purpose. And the church which is His body is to be the witness of His eternal purpose and of the grace that is in Christ Jesus. In Colossians we see Paul lifting up the Christ and all of His grandeur. He is the creator, the redeemer, and the head of the church. And He is preeminence, firstborn over all creation. Now all of these things which we all know were Paul's

witness of all the things he knew about Christ. In these books of Ephesians and Colossians we see the substance of the testimony of Jesus.

But we are thankful for the letter to the Philippians. The church in Philippi was a Macedonian church and was not rich by any means. But they had been praying and supporting the apostle Paul since his second journey. Paul obviously felt so wonderfully bound with these saints that he opened up his heart to them and shared his personal testimony. And it is an amazing testimony especially if you know Paul's background. Paul said there was a time when I held things important in my life – my religion, my zeal for righteousness, my authentic Jewish heritage. These were the many things that I held as important to me. But then I met Christ. And I began to know Christ. And Paul said what I began to see was the excellency of Christ my Lord. What Paul was saying was that when I began to know Jesus, there was something excellent about Him and He changed everything in my life. Now I considered the things rubbish which I once thought wonderful. Paul had now seen the ultimate and he was spoiled by the knowledge of Christ. So Paul put away all those things he thought important. And as a matter of fact by the time he wrote Philippians, when he said I am forgetting the things that lied behind, it not only included the former heritage but also included the former successes he had in building churches and other things.

And Paul shared with the Philippians 'here is my testimony: I want to gain Christ, I want to know Him'. And suddenly we realize that there is so much more to know about Christ than just what we know at the beginning. Now it will take us longer than our whole weekend here if we are to share on all the things that Paul saw in Christ. But you have to agree with me on this. He had been captivated by Christ and I would like to see how knowing Christ affected his ministry as he ministered to the Philippians. And when we look at the letter to the Philippians, we see that Paul not only ministered the doctrinal, objective knowledge of Christ to the people, but the Christ life within him was ministered with overflowing encouragement to these saints. Tonight I want to share how Paul ministered or what he had already known of Christ. As he had seen Christ he began to live on a higher ground as he ministered to the saints in Philippi. Then in the second session, if God willing, I would like to share on how he was stretching forth to know more of Christ. And this is the testimony to us who serve the Lord. What do you know of the Lord? Then we should minister out of that. And if our knowledge and testimony of our Lord are to remain fresh, there need to be a further pursuing. I think if we just minister of what we know and then fail to pursue further, soon it will become stale. But if we join with Paul stretching forward to the mark and high calling of God in Christ Jesus then our testimony is ever expanding. We notice when Paul was ministering to the Philippians, we see something that is important. Paul was encouraging this church. Evidently there were some problems because they were preaching the gospel, and Paul wanted to encourage them. This is so important in our ministry, to encourage the saints. And so we see how Paul was encouraging the Philippians out

of his own encouragement from the Lord. Before we look at how he encouraged the saints, we will just do a brief outline in terms of Paul's testimony.

If there is a theme to his testimony, it is Philippians 3:8 'I want to gain Christ'. What a testimony it was. He had such a love for the Lord. He saw something so tremendous in the Lord. That I may gain Christ. I have to look at that next time. Now we summarize the four chapters. Paul's testimony for the first chapter is 1:21 'For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain'. Christ was his life and he shared this with them. It was not about doctrine. It was not about service. It was about life – Christ, my life. In chapter 2 it is verse 5, 'For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ'. That is, have the mind of Christ. That was his testimony. He told the Philippians we need the mind of Christ. Chapter 3 is verse 8 – I press on for the goal; Christ was my goal. Is not that wonderful? He did not have goals of victory or so many churches started or so many souls saved. His goal was Christ. And then chapter 4 is verse 13 – I can do all things through Him who strengthens me: Christ, my strength. What a wonderful testimony it was – Christ my life, Christ my mind, Christ my goal and Christ my strength. Paul began to see Christ as the alpha and omega and that everything came down to Christ. I just leave that impression with you of Paul's testimony.

But I need to ask you a few questions. Now when those we served observed us what do they see? When we serve God, do they see our dedication or our ambition? Or maybe they see our intelligence, our sincerity? Or do they see a lover of Christ? Paul wrote many letters. Some of them are very doctrinal and strong in knowledge and objective. But in every one of those epistles you can see that Paul had a heart for Christ Himself. Paul was an apostle, bond servant and a steward. But he was a lover of Christ. He was so full of Christ. You remember how Jesus spoke to the disciples in John 14 – the prince of this world is coming for Me, but he has nothing in Me. Paul's horizon seemed to be so full of Christ that indeed he was crucified with Christ and dead to the world and Satan did not seem to get into Paul's life. The point I try to make is that the gospel of Jesus is not just something that we preach but something we live. If we preach great doctrine like Christ lives in me, or Christ works through me, is that a reality that can be seen that we are standing in the power of His resurrection? This is what strikes me and challenges me when I look at Paul's testimony. What did Paul say about Jesus? To me to live is Christ. Christ is my goal. Christ is my strength. This was Paul's testimony.

Now we want to see how Paul ministered to the elders and saints in Philippi. Paul had grown in his knowledge of Christ. And we have to admit that when Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians he has grown and matured in deep knowledge of his Savior. He was talking about knowing. We can imagine when Paul was first saved; he was hungry and was searching for answers to his Christian life. And Paul searched the scripture and began to put together how Christ could become 'my righteousness, my salvation and my justification by faith'. These doctrines he had to work out in his mind. I can almost picture Paul's days out in the desert with

scrolls before him trying to figure out what was this righteousness by faith and all of these things that had happened to his life. So the first thing was the desire to gain the knowledge of these truths. Of course there was a difference. I think with the keenness of Paul's mind, he might become a very strong doctrinaire. But the problem was that Paul said when he went off to pursue these things, Christ was revealed to him. So he could never forget that salvation has to do with the Savior and the righteousness has to do with His righteousness within the one who has been revealed.

To the young people, do you love the Lord? Then you should study the word to show yourself, to prove them to God and to be able to divide the word of God and to understand these things for yourself. This subjective knowledge is very important to us. But do not forget, you also need to know the Christ who dwells in you the hope of glory.

Paul like most of us came to stage two where he served the Lord faithfully preaching the gospel. It is so wonderful to preach the gospel because you bear witness of Christ Jesus. And you know what happens when you do that? To those who witness the gospel of Christ, the Holy Spirit in you revealed Christ in fuller and greater dimension. So when Paul was preaching the gospel in Damascus after he was saved, he was preaching the Christ who saves. By the time he was preaching in Antioch he was preaching the fullness of Christ and Christ our life. Are you such a servant? Has the Lord begun to reveal things about Himself to you? Upon that basis of the gospel foundation, the Holy Spirit begins to reveal to you Christ in His fullness. I remember a point in my earlier days when I could not wait to read another book by Watchman Nee that Brother Kaung translated into English. You may be used to reading the works of our brother and I think you will agree with me that he had so much revelation. Reading his book is like the fourth of July. I wanted to see more revelation. Are you such a servant? You would love to read such books to discover more revelation of Christ. By the time Paul got to Philippians, he was in the third stage. He was still grounded on the basic foundation of the gospel. He still wanted further revelation. But his life was no longer just focused on the ministry but now was focused on the Lord Himself. What do you think Paul's testimony means when he said 'I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus'? Surely Paul continued to minister. Even when he was in prison he continued to write letters, to pray and to serve. Did he find 'a higher ministry'? He was still an apostle, still a bond servant but now he was serving the Lord Himself. We, who are the faithful servants of God, we sometimes serve the house. But do we serve the Lord? So Paul in his ministry by the time he wrote Philippians had an aspect of his life that transcended ministry. It had to do with something personally related to Christ.

We will go back to Philippians and see how Paul used his knowledge to minister to these saints. In order to see how he ministered, we have to go back to 1:21 'for to me to live is Christ, to die is gain'. Paul was in a difficult situation. Many things were unknown in his life, whether he would

be released to minister again or whether he would be martyred for the Lord. But Paul had come to a position of rest in a relationship to Christ that enabled him to minister to the Philippians. If you look at the verses around 1:21, you see how this was worked out in Paul's own life. Such was his experience of Christ in his own life that he was able to say to depart and be with Christ would be much better. How many of you want to live and never die? Just if I can stay alive another day. That is all I want. If I can just survive, that is important. But for Paul it is 'for me to live is Christ and to die is gain'. So you noticed he said in 1:23 that he was hard pressed between two situations. To depart to be with Christ would be much better. How do you feel about that? Can we love Christ so much that death loses its sting? It seems that Paul said here, it was better to be with Christ. Now the only person who can say that and be really true is someone who knew Christ so well that he could no longer not be with Him. But then Paul said on the other hand to remain was necessary for your sake. So Paul said what was I going to do? Did this bother him? No, he had learned that his life was in the sovereign hands of his God. And he said I knew the Lord would do what was best. As a matter of fact if you look at Philippians 1:19-21, Paul said 'for I know that this shall turn out for me to salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ; according to my earnest expectation and hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but in all boldness, as always, now also Christ shall be magnified in my body whether by life or by death. For for me to live is Christ, and to die gain'. He said 'So should I go there or should I stay here? I will not make that decision. I will leave it to the Lord. And I know something in my heart. I think the Lord is going to release me because of your prayers and because the Holy Spirit is working. I know I need to stay a little longer for your sake and for the Lord's. But no guarantees whether I am absent or with you. Whatever happens I have one earnest expectation. That the Lord will keep my testimony in my body and I will boldly declare the testimony whether in death or in life'. He said 'is it life or is it death. That is not my decision. My decision is that I want to exalt my Lord in whatever is best'. So we can see that Paul had come to rest in the wrestling in his knowledge of Christ.

So let us go back and see how he encouraged the Philippians. The Philippians had been preaching the gospel and were facing some difficulties and some conflicts. And so if we were to describe the atmosphere of chapter 1, we would say it would be that of encouragement. Here was Paul, sitting in prison and he had wrestled many nights what was the purpose and what God's will was for him. But there in his imprisoned circumstances the Lord had come to him many times with encouragement and comfort. So now it was time to write to the saints in Philippi. And his love for Christ and love for them overflowed in the letter. Many bible books said that the theme of the Book of Philippians is the joy of the Lord. Now actually that is not the topic of the Book of Philippians. It is just the life of somebody whose life was joy overflowed with Christ. He wrote to the Philippians and he encouraged their hearts. He wrote them saying 'every time I think of you I am full of thanksgiving and joy. And you know why I feel that way. I am so glad you are doing the same job that I am doing. You are preaching the gospel. You are

bearing the witness. My heart is right with you. I wish I was there with you preaching the gospel. Do you remember what we found? We always find sufficient grace when we preach the gospel. And since you are serving along with me in this ministry of the gospel, I am very confident of something. First, that God has begun a good work in you and second He will complete on the day of His return. In the day of Christ when He returns, your work will have been completed'. And so he encouraged them as fellow soldiers of the gospel.

Now who should be encouraging who? Maybe the Philippians sent Paul a letter. Paul was the one in jail but he was encouraging the saints. He was the one full of joy. I know Paul had been accused of things but I have a hard time finding selfishness in him. When you look at the next section of verses 12 -18 in chapter 1, Paul said you know what I had discovered in my situation in jail? Christ was in complete and sovereign control. He said 'I want to report to you, that the circumstances of my imprisonment have resulted in the furtherance of the gospel'. You can just imagine the Philippians praying for Paul asking God to help him and help him get out. Love prays and love causes others to have concern. So Paul set their hearts at rest. He spoke to them as people who had inside information. It almost seemed as if he was saying remember that time when I was in Philippi and I was in jail, and how God turned everything around and the jailer was saved as a result of my imprisonment and now it happened again. He said in verse 13 that now since his imprisonment he had a chance to preach to the Roman guards and some of them were getting saved. And then there were some Roman brothers here who saw my imprisonment and became bolder in preaching the gospel. Then he said of course there were some of those who preached the gospel to spite me. It did not bother me. I was glad the gospel was going out, however it was, it was going out.

What I am trying to show you is that Paul brought all these things to a whole new ground of resurrection regarding his imprisonment. And what he was showing was that in his trust of Christ, he knew the ministry was not about him. There was a dear brother who came to Richmond to speak years ago. And he went through several years of difficulty in his life where he was limited in his ministry. And afterwards he wrote a book. This was a big preacher and his book is titled 'God Can Do It Without Me'. This is what Paul was saying. It is the gospel work that is important. With me in prison, the gospel went on. So first of all, praise God. And then he told them in verses 27-30 that they had an important role in this gospel ministry. 'I want you to know that God has counted you worthy of suffering for the sake of God. You remember in the Book of Act, how the brothers preached gospel in a town and when they left the town they would shake the dust off their feet and rejoiced and went to the next town. And they rejoiced of being counted to be worthy to suffer for the sake of the gospel'. So Paul said 'listen, you are sharing the gospel, you are sharing the same suffering that I am going through. So rejoice, join with me and be faithful. This is a privilege'.

Let us look at the second example. Philippians 2: 5 – 11 is one of the most famous passages ‘let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman’s form, taking his place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal beings, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to God the Father’s glory.’

We know there was a problem in Philippi from Philippians 4:1. There were two sisters who were having conflict. Rather than Paul said to them, you two sisters, stop it; Paul before he talked to the sisters he wanted all the saints in Philippi to look towards the attitude that Christ Jesus had. And so he said, let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus. Now actually there are two different words that Paul used for the mind of Christ. Both words are words for mind. There is an objective mind of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 2:16 ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord, who shall instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ’, we see Paul using the mind of Christ which points to the objective knowledge, intelligence. So what Paul was saying was that this was spiritual, that God was revealing the objective knowledge to his people. But in Philippians 2 it is another word that was used which relates to our thinking and our attitude to expressing our mind. So in our English translation, it is ‘now have this attitude of Christ, have this way of thinking’. A new translation called Message, said this ‘think of yourself the way Christ Jesus thought of himself’. What was Paul’s point? His point was: do you live in Christ? Does Christ live in you? If this is true, then at some point His attitude should become our attitude and His way of thinking should be our way of thinking. And especially he was talking of two things; having an attitude of humility and of serving obedience. So Paul addressed the Philippians in chapter 2 – now you are suffering for the gospel and I know while you are suffering, you also receive God’s comfort and consolation of love. If you would make me happy, have this mind, attitude of Christ among yourself. Have this humility not conceit; this preferring one another. We were being transformed in the character of Christ. But even as He had such an attitude, we also should have the same attitude. So what did Paul do? Let us look at Jesus. What was I talking about? What kind of mind did I mean? Look at Jesus, He was in the form of God, He did not feel like He had to grasp it. He let it go, He humbled Himself and He became a man, a servant. He became obedient to death. And now God has highly exalted Him. You should have that same attitude. You could not force someone to be humble. People who faked humbleness were doubly proud. But if Christ’s life was being transformed in you, this attitude became so real that Paul did not say have this mind but rather this mind in you. It was not that you are being humble. But he said the humility of Christ was in you.

And in Philippians 4, He applied it to these two sisters Euodia and Syntyche. Now I think every fellowship has these two sisters, Euodia and Syntyche. I was in a fellowship once and these two

sisters always had conflicts. One was always going out to find people and witnessing to them and bringing them in. She was full of love. The other sister was a teacher and she liked to teach the truth. But she was a little over critical; always had an opinion. The other sister never had an opinion. They had a conflict. It was because they did not have the mind of Christ. It ended up having a conflict among all sisters there.

Paul said in 4:1-2 'So that, my brethren, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, thus stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I exhort Euodia, and exhort Syntyche, to be of the same mind in the Lord'. The word 'exhort' means I come along side and then the word 'mind' is exactly the same word that he used in chapter 2. Literally he said I want you Euodia and Syntyche to have the mind of Christ. And then he asked the responsible brothers to have the same mind of Christ to help them. He wanted them to live in this co-working together, to be bound in this same mind of Christ. Now this is very important especially if we serve the Lord in the church. I do not think I need to tell you that if we want to have a testimony in the fellowship we need to have the mind of Jesus. It is true there are many so called Christian works going on that promote pride, jealousy and everything that is opposite to Christ's mind. But you can see that Paul's knowledge of Christ includes Paul's mind being humble and obedient. And so he tried to encourage the brothers and sisters to live this way – in humbleness and harmony. The reality is that the Lord had set both Euodia and Syntyche in the body of Christ. Each one served Christ in their own way and both built up the church. But if Christ is to be our life and our testimony, then His mind should also be ours.

There is one final point. Paul had learned to rest in the nearness of the Lord's coming. Look at 4:4-5 'Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known of all men. The Lord is near'. Why is it that every brother who comes to know the Lord has a feeling that His coming is very near. This is not just a wish that they have. It is a sense that they have. And so Paul was talking about Euodia and Syntyche. He said, 'You know the Lord is coming very soon. Be gentle in spirit'. It is hard for God's worker to be gentle in spirit. I remember this older pastor talking to a young preacher and this young preacher asked him, 'what you think of my message'? The old man said 'you got to make up your mind whether you want to feed the sheep or club the goat'. In light of the fact that the Lord is near, can we be gentle with one another? In light of the fact that the Lord is near, can we rejoice in the Lord and again rejoice. In the light of the fact that the Lord is near can we be anxious for nothing but with prayer and thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God and He will keep our peace. Is that possible? And because the Lord is near, be occupied with these things, whatever is pure, just, noble, amiable and of good report, think of these things. I heard the republican and democratic convention and I heard nothing pure, just or noble. And actually Paul was saying something stronger than just thinking of these things. Romans 6:11 said, 'reckon yourself dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus'. He was using the same word 'reckon' here with regards to truth. You can see Paul was on a higher calling.

Now you workers of the Lord, in the church you are the ones who are known as the worriers. You cannot let go, you fret a lot. Should the servant of God worries about his health and finances? If the Lord is very near, do not worry about these stuffs. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. How can you do that? I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. Chapter 4 is so precious in telling us how to learn to be content in whatever situation we are in because Paul knew that the Lord is his Jehovah Jireh. All I am trying to say is that Paul was living out his love for Christ and he was encouraging the saints to live on a higher plane. Now we are witnesses. And so may we pursue the Christ that Paul pursued so that we can live on a higher ground.

Lord, we are so thankful that Paul was met by You in every way on resurrection ground. All the things made for death has been overcome and he was living on a higher plane. During these days together, may You open our eyes to the excellency of Christ which is so precious, until Christ is our life. And Christ is our mind. And Christ is our goal. And Christ is our sublime. Oh Lord to this higher ground we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.