

Paul had quite a resume in the Jewish religious community. He was the poster boy for orthodoxy. If righteousness could come through obedience to the Law, he was as righteous as anyone could be. (3:6) Yet, after meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5-6), he understood that all that was a hindrance, not a help. It hadn't really brought him any closer to knowing God. His heart was never changed. Though he knew what God expected of him, his best efforts weren't getting him any closer to being that person. (Romans 7:18) At least he could say he did a better job of living up to the Law's demands than the next guy. But after meeting the risen Jesus, he knew it wasn't enough.

Paul's keeping the letter of the Law to the best of his ability ended in him killing the family of faith! No wonder he later wrote that the Letter kills but the Spirit gives life. He personally experienced the Letter without the Spirit.

The Law didn't change. His understanding of the Law did. Now, instead of trying to please God by keeping the rules of the Law, he trusted in what the Messiah had done for him. (Galatians 2:20) All his education, all his fastidious efforts to do everything in the Law, the respect he had earned among his peers was suddenly seen as a detriment and not a help. He wrote, *7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.*

In fact, nothing mattered anymore, religious or secular, inherited or earned. He let it *all* go. *8 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* He realized the longing of his heart was to know his Messiah. All his efforts were just getting in the way. He had found something of surpassing worth, Christ Jesus! He was living the parable Jesus told about the man who found a treasure in field or a pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46), who, once he found the thing of surpassing worth, sold everything to obtain the treasure.

Paul's eyes were opened on the road to Damascus. They were opened to begin to see the surpassing worth of Jesus. Later, he will write that God did that for him because he was acting in ignorance. (1Timothy 1:13) He was sincerely doing what he believed was right, but was sincerely wrong. God had mercy on him, revealed Jesus to him, and he was never the same. The zeal he had for God then turned from protecting the religion as defined by his teachers to personally knowing the Messiah as his Savior.

At this point, I think we should stop for a moment to consider whether we may be chasing something of inferior worth. Has God revealed to you that Jesus is the great

Commented [Paul1]: Philippians 3:6 (ESV)

⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Commented [Paul2]: Acts 9:5-6 (NIV)

⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Commented [Paul3]: Romans 7:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

Commented [Paul4]: Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Commented [Paul5]: Matthew 13:44-46 (ESV)

⁴⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵ "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls,

⁴⁶ who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Commented [Paul6]: 1 Timothy 1:13 (NIV)

¹³ Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

treasure of such surpassing worth for which we'd be foolish not to give up everything and count *all else* loss? (2Samuel 7:22)

I think that many of our faith struggles come from a lack of seeing the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus. When the value of something, whether a physical possession, or prestige, or a relationship, holds our heart back from commitment to Jesus, we probably haven't seen the surpassing worth of knowing Him.

For Paul, it wasn't just the revelation on the road to Damascus, which was the beginning. It was the continual dawning of the Scripture's unveiling of the heart of Messiah and the plan of God. Sometimes it overflowed from Paul's pen in bursts of praise. ³³ *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* Romans 11:33 (ESV)
³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.* Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)
¹⁷ *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* ¹⁸ *And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.* ¹⁹ *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,* Colossians 1:17-19 (NIV)

You don't have to have a Damascus Road experience. You just need to let the Spirit reveal Jesus through the Scriptures. That is what deepened Paul's sense of the worth of his Savior.

With Paul, the great sense of mercy and forgiveness was also a factor. (1Timothy 1:15) It should be for us as well. Maybe you didn't help to put Christians to death, but before you knew Jesus you were alienated from God in your mind. (Ephesians 2:3) You inherited the fallen nature of Adam. (1Corinthians 15:22) Any good works you did can be put in the same category as Paul's religiosity. They were a hindrance, not a help, because it blinded us to our need.

How many times have you heard someone say they think they are good enough to get into heaven? That just means they know nothing of the holiness of God. The clearer we see how depraved we are without Jesus, the more we appreciate what He has done and the plans He has for us. The more we see the judgment we deserve, the more we see the surpassing worth of Jesus.

But it is even more than what He has done. It is also who He is. A love that would die for us while we were still sinners came from an amazing heart of love. (Romans 5:8) We all long to be loved unconditionally. We crave the love that will not let us go

Commented [Paul7]: 2 Samuel 7:22 (ESV)

²² Therefore you are great, O LORD God. For there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears.

Commented [Paul8]: 1 Timothy 1:15 (NIV)

¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.

Commented [Paul9]: Ephesians 2:3 (NIV)

³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

Commented [Paul10]: 1 Corinthians 15:22 (ESV)

²² For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Commented [Paul11]: Romans 5:8 (ESV)

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

regardless of how long it takes to change us. The only place we will find it is in Jesus. He's it! Paul realized that and so he could say that everything else is left behind. (3:8)

He just wants more of Jesus, 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* -- Be found in Him. In other words to moment by moment experience the life of Christ in the depths of his being. He wants to continually be clothed in Christ. (Galatians 3:27)

Regardless of your occupation, you can do that job the way Jesus would do it if it were His job, that is of course, if you are found in Him. Do whatever you do as unto the Lord (Ephesians 6:5-6), representing Him to those you come in contact. Best of all, when we go to our heavenly home and stand before the judge, we'll have a righteousness that comes through faith in Christ. God will look on our soul and see the righteousness of Jesus... if we are found in Him. (2Corinthians 5:21)

Then it is as if the passage breaks and Paul's thought goes to a higher plane. It is definitely connected with his experience of considering all things loss to know Jesus, but it sounds like a mission statement right out of Paul's heart. ¹⁰ *that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*

There are four things of Jesus that Paul desires. First and foremost is to know Him. The Greek word is used here in the Hebrew sense of relationship (Heb -*yada* – Genesis 4:1). In 1Corinthians 8:3, Paul uses this word in the sense of God being in relationship with us. ³ *But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.* Paul wants to deepen his love relationship with Jesus. He sees the surpassing worth of Jesus, but he knows there is even more. He desires a greater revelation of Jesus. The more he sees of Him, the more he loves Him. In Ephesians 4:13 Paul related knowing Jesus to spiritual maturity. Knowing Christ intimately leads to spiritual maturity. **Are you increasing in the knowledge of the Son of God?**

That is the first half of our purpose statement as well, "To know Christ..." We increase in that intimate knowledge of Him as we study the Word, letting it speak to our hearts.

A number of you contacted me during the week and said you were taking up this call to read the passage before Sunday and meditate on it and then to take home what the Spirit spoke to your heart on Sunday and apply it, making it a part of your life each day. You've said you do want to know Him and what He would say to our hearts through His word each week. And then there are your own devotional times in the word as well. As

Commented [Paul12]: Philippians 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ 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

Commented [Paul13]: Galatians 3:27 (ESV)

²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Commented [Paul14]: Ephesians 6:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,
⁶ not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

Commented [Paul15]: 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Commented [Paul16]: Genesis 4:1 (ESV)

¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the LORD.

Commented [Paul17]: Ephesians 4:13 (ESV)

¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

we live out what He is showing us, we experience His power in our lives. When we face a situation or a conversation and we are found in Him, we know Him by experience.

The second thing Paul desired was **to know the power of His resurrection**. In Ephesians 1:19-20 Paul prayed that the church of Ephesus would know the power of the resurrection in their own lives. Paul knows that to carry out his mission he needs that power in his own life. He wants to daily experience the power that can take a person who has been crucified with Christ and make him tool in the hands of Almighty God. He wants to be a weapon that can utter the powerful word of God and break through the darkness and set captives free for the glory of God.

Here is how he put it in the letter to the Romans. *¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.* Romans 8:11 (ESV) The Spirit of life gives us life in the resurrected Lord. It is resurrection life in these mortal bodies, right now! Not someday when we die. He'll write about that in the next verse. Paul is talking about presently experiencing resurrection power.

When the Spirit of God is behind your speech, you are experiencing resurrection power. When you have joy in the midst of the loss of the things of this world, you are experiencing resurrection power. Whenever you react to life in a way that the world cannot comprehend because of the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead living in you... yes!

Paul experienced it over and over but he wants more. He was literally raised from the dead. (Acts 14:19-20) He was made bold before kings and rulers. He raised the dead and preached the word in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. (1Corinthians 2:4) Still he wanted more of Jesus. Do you want more? Then pray, "More Lord! I want to know You! I want to know Your resurrection power!"

More of Christ and less of me,
To know You intimately.
Resurrection power divine,
Take me Savior, make me Thine!

The third request is the one we saw in 1:29. Paul wanted to **share in Christ's sufferings**. What does that mean? It means that this world is ruled by the prince of the air, the spirit that is now at work in those who are disobedient (Ephesians 2:2), the unholy spirit. A soldier for Jesus is going to have some battle scars. Epaphroditus almost died. Brother Sam almost died. Paul was waiting for his sentence and would one day be decapitated. Paul loves Jesus so much and the truth that Jesus is, that he is not only

Commented [Paul18]: Ephesians 1:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

Commented [Paul19]: Acts 14:19-20 (ESV)

¹⁹But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. ²⁰But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

Commented [Paul20]: 1 Corinthians 2:4 (ESV)

⁴and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,

Commented [Paul21]: Philippians 1:29 (ESV)

²⁹For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,

Commented [Paul22]: Ephesians 2:2 (ESV)

²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience

willing to suffer with Jesus for that truth, but finds fellowship with Christ in it. That is the Greek word used in the passage, to fellowship in His sufferings. Paul wrote that all that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2Timothy 3:12)

I'd like to think that was for another time and another place. My flesh would just like to get along with everyone and try to find common ground. But when you stand with Christ, you stand against the world, and the world will make you pay one way or the other. I don't believe you can know Christ and have the resurrection power in your life and not also, in some form, fellowship with Him in His sufferings. (Acts 14:22)

Finally, Paul was becoming like Jesus in his death. This is an ongoing present tense, "becoming". Paul desired to live every moment like Jesus died. He died forgiving, encouraging, witnessing the love of God, quoting Scripture and once and for all triumphant! And He did it in the midst of great suffering. It's as if the thought of fellowship with Christ in His sufferings brought to mind the awesome demonstration of victorious life that Jesus demonstrated on the cross.

I'll be honest with you. I want the first two. I want to know Jesus. I want to experience resurrection power. I'm not too excited about suffering with Jesus and being like Him in His death. But I think the more the first two work in us, the more we'll begin to long for the last two as well.

Paul follows this purpose statement with a vision statement. ¹¹ *that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.* It sounds as if he's saying that these desires of his may earn him the right to be worthy of resurrection, but that cannot be the case. In a few verses he will confidently say that we are already citizens of heaven who will be transformed into the image of Christ. (3:20-21) Paul was sure of his resurrection and he writes about it in other letters. (1Corinthians 15:51-52; 1Thessalonians 4:16-17)

We should take this as an expression of Paul's humility. He speaks of persevering to the end (1Timothy 4:16) and has seen others fall. (1Timothy 4:10) Considering his past, he doesn't want to be overconfident in himself, but rather he places all confidence in Christ and His sacrifice to "somehow" make it possible for him to experience the final resurrection.

Why is physical resurrection such an important goal? It's not just about eternal life, or his heavenly rewards, or even his new heavenly body. What he's really looking forward to is the unhindered presence of Christ, and of knowing Him even as we are known. (1Corinthians 13:12) That is what Paul lives for daily and hopes for in the future. (1:21)

Commented [Paul23]: 2 Timothy 3:12 (ESV)

¹² Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Commented [Paul24]: Philippians 3:20-21 (ESV)

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,
²¹ 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.

Commented [Paul25]: 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (ESV)

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Commented [Paul26]: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (ESV)

¹⁶ 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.

¹⁷ 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.

Commented [Paul27]: 1 Timothy 4:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Commented [Paul28]: 1 Timothy 4:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

Commented [Paul29]: 1 Corinthians 13:12 (ESV)

¹² For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

Commented [Paul30]: Philippians 1:21 (ESV)

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

How about you? If you can't say that you are long to be in the presence of Jesus, then you need a vision of His surpassing worth. We see that greatness in the Scriptures, in how He lived, in the words He spoke, in the way He died, and in His victory over death. Is Jesus worth losing everything else, even this earthly life? Absolutely! Do you want to know Him more? Do you want to experience in His resurrection power? How about fellowshiping with Him in His suffering and being conformed to His death? We're not able, but are you willing? Then pray as Paul did to know Jesus, his resurrection power, the fellowship of His suffering, becoming like Him in His death.

Questions

- 1 Why did Paul count everything loss?
- 2 Paul was living which parables?
- 3 How did Paul come to know the surpassing greatness of Christ?
- 4 How can we...?
- 5 What does Paul mean by knowing Him?
- 6 What is the second thing Paul desired? What is its application to your life?
- 7 What does Romans 8:11 mean?
- 8 What is the third thing Paul desired?
- 9 Why would he want that?
- 10 What is the fourth?
- 11 What does verse 11 mean?
- 12 Will you make these four desires of Paul your own? Is Jesus worth it?