



## SERMON SERIES STUDY GUIDE

### **Philippians: The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Christ, Pt. 3**

Pastor John Riggs

#### **Summary:**

This sermon explores Philippians 3:7-15, focusing on the Apostle Paul's radical transformation from religious legalism to intimate relationship with Christ. The pastor emphasizes that Paul exchanged everything he once valued in his religious achievements—his Jewish pedigree, Pharisaical credentials, and blameless adherence to the law—for the "surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus." The message challenges believers to examine what they place in their "value column" and whether Christ truly holds the supreme position. Through Paul's Damascus road encounter, we see that religion cannot lead us to truly know God; only a personal encounter with Christ brings genuine transformation. The sermon stresses that Christianity is not merely about justification (salvation) but about ongoing sanctification—walking in intimate relationship with Jesus daily, denying self, and pressing forward to know Him more deeply.

#### **Video Breakdown:**

- Chapter 1: The Great Exchange: Religion vs. Christ
  - 0:00 - 12:12
  - We explore the difference between religious activity and truly knowing Christ, examining how religion can never lead us to an intimate relationship with God.
- Chapter 2: What Will You Exchange for Your Soul?
  - 12:12 - 21:37
  - We examine Jesus's teaching about the value of the soul and the necessity of making an exchange, denying ourselves to follow Christ and gain true treasure.
- Chapter 3: Paul's Conversion: An Encounter with Christ
  - 21:37 - 36:38
  - We witness Paul's dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, where he encountered Christ and everything he valued was instantly transformed.
- Chapter 4: Living in Union with Christ
  - 36:38 - 50:54
  - We learn that knowing Christ is not just about justification but about ongoing sanctification, denying ourselves daily and growing in intimate relationship with Him.

## Scripture References from the Sermon

### Explicitly Referenced Scriptures

1. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 - Theme verse read at the beginning
2. Philippians 3:7-15 - Main passage read and discussed
3. Philippians 3:17-21 - Additional verses read from the main passage
4. Matthew 16:24-28 - Jesus' teaching on denying self and following Him
5. Matthew 13:44-45 - Parables of the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price
6. Matthew 19:16-22 - The rich young ruler
7. Acts 9:1-28 - Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus (specifically verses 1, 10, 20, 23, 28 mentioned)

### Alluded to or Referenced in Discussion

8. Hebrews 9:22 - "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins" (alluded to)
9. 2 Corinthians 5:17 - "New creation in Christ" (alluded to)
10. Romans 1:16 - "Not ashamed of the gospel, the power of God unto salvation" (referenced)
11. Hebrews 4:12 - "Word of God as a double-edged sword" (alluded to)
12. Ephesians 5:22-25 - Husband-wife relationship as picture of Christ and the church (referenced in marriage illustration)
13. Genesis 2:24 - "Man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife" (referenced)
14. Colossians 1:15 - "Jesus as the image of the invisible God" (alluded to)
15. John 14:9 - "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father" (referenced)

### Suggested Related Verses for Main Themes

#### Theme: The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ

- Philippians 3:8 - Counting all things as loss for Christ
- Jeremiah 9:23-24 - Glory in knowing the Lord

#### Theme: Salvation by Grace Through Faith Alone

- Ephesians 2:8-9 - Saved by grace through faith, not works
- Romans 3:23-24 - All have sinned, justified freely by grace
- Titus 3:5 - Not by works of righteousness

#### Theme: The Gospel's Power

- 1 Corinthians 1:18 - The message of the cross is the power of God

#### Theme: Union with Christ

- Galatians 2:20 - Crucified with Christ, yet I live
- Romans 6:4-5 - United with Christ in death and resurrection

#### Theme: Pressing On Toward the Goal

- Philippians 3:12-14 - Pressing on toward the goal
- Hebrews 12:1-2 - Running the race set before us

**Key Points:**

- Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone—no works or religious activity can earn God's approval
- Paul warned against "dogs" (Judaizers) who added requirements to the gospel, a danger that still exists today
- Paul's pre-conversion resume was impressive by religious standards, but he counted it all as loss compared to knowing Christ
- The soul has immense value—Christ paid the ultimate price to purchase our souls
- True Christianity involves an exchange: moving worldly values to the deficit column and placing Christ as the supreme asset
- Paul's Damascus road experience demonstrates that encountering Christ radically transforms priorities and values
- Knowing God is not about distant religious observance but intimate relationship through the Holy Spirit dwelling within believers
- Christians must not stop at justification but continue in sanctification—growing in knowledge of Christ throughout life
- The Christian life requires daily self-denial, similar to how marriage requires denying self for the sake of unity
- Paul acknowledged he had not arrived at perfection but pressed forward, forgetting what was behind and straining toward the goal

**NOTES:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Discussion Questions:**

Paul describes counting everything as loss compared to knowing Christ. What are some things in your life that you may still be holding in the 'asset column' that need to be moved to make room for Christ as your surpassing value?

---

---

The sermon contrasts religion with relationship with Christ. How can we guard against falling into religious activity while missing genuine intimacy with God?

---

---

When the rich young ruler walked away from Jesus because of his possessions, he couldn't make the exchange. What does this teach us about the cost of discipleship and what might be holding us back from fully following Christ?

---

---

The pastor shared the story of the man in Bangladesh whose entire livelihood was based on a tree he claimed had power. What modern-day 'trees' do people build their lives around instead of Christ?

---

---

Paul says he has not yet obtained perfection but presses on toward the goal. How does this tension between being justified in Christ and still being sanctified affect how we view our daily walk with God?

---

---

The sermon emphasizes that we can actually know God, not just know about Him. What practical steps can we take to move from head knowledge to experiential knowledge of Christ?

---

---



## **Small Group Guide: The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ**

### **Based on Philippians 3:7-15**

#### **OPENING PRAYER**

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to understand the surpassing value of knowing Christ personally, not just religiously.

#### **ICEBREAKER**

**Share a time when you exchanged something of lesser value for something far more valuable. How did you feel about that exchange?**

#### **KEY SCRIPTURE**

**Philippians 3:7-8** - "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

#### **SERMON RECAP**

The pastor explored how Paul made a radical exchange—moving everything he once valued (his religious pedigree, achievements, and status) from the "asset column" to the "loss column" when he encountered Christ. True Christianity is not about religion but about knowing Jesus personally and intimately.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

##### **1. Understanding the Exchange**

- What things did Paul consider valuable before encountering Christ? (Review Philippians 3:4-6)
- What caused Paul to completely re-evaluate everything he once treasured?
- How does Paul's conversion story in Acts 9 illustrate this radical transformation?

##### **2. Religion vs. Relationship**

- What is the difference between knowing *about* God through religion and *knowing* God through relationship with Christ?
- The pastor said, "You will never find that [knowing Jesus] in religion. Ever." Why is this true?
- Have you ever struggled with trying to earn God's approval through religious activities or good works?

##### **3. The Value of a Soul**

- Jesus asked in Matthew 16:26, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and yet forfeits his soul?" How does this question challenge our priorities?
- How did the story of the man with the "powerful tree" in Bangladesh illustrate the gospel's power to transform values?
- What does it mean that when we persecute other believers, we are persecuting Christ himself? (Acts 9:4-5)

##### **4. Personal Application**

- What is currently in your "asset column"—the things you value most?
- Is Jesus Christ the "surpassing value" of your life, or have other things crept ahead of Him?
- The pastor used the marriage analogy: justification is like the wedding, but sanctification is living life together. How are you "doing life" with Jesus daily?

##### **5. The Ongoing Journey**

- Paul said in Philippians 3:12, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on." What does this teach us about spiritual maturity?
- What does it mean to "forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead"? (Philippians 3:13-14)
- How can we cultivate a growing desire to know Christ more deeply?

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. **Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone**—we cannot add anything to Christ's finished work to earn God's approval.
2. **Knowing Christ is not the same as knowing about Christ**—true Christianity is an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus, not religious activity.
3. **The gospel has power to transform**—when people encounter Christ, values are radically reordered.
4. **Christianity doesn't stop at justification**—we must continue growing in our relationship with Christ through sanctification.
5. **Self-denial is essential**—just as in marriage, following Christ requires daily denying ourselves and putting Him first.

### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

#### This Week, I Will:

- **Examine my "asset column"**: List what I currently value most and honestly assess whether Christ holds the highest place.
- **Practice self-denial**: Identify one area where my flesh is demanding attention and intentionally deny it to follow Christ.
- **Pursue knowing Christ more**: Spend focused time in prayer and Scripture, asking God to reveal Himself to me personally, not just intellectually.
- **Share the gospel**: Look for one opportunity this week to share the transforming power of Christ with someone who doesn't know Him.
- **Evaluate my relationships**: Consider whether I'm "doing life" with Jesus daily or just relying on my initial salvation experience.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL JOURNALING

1. When did I first encounter Christ? How has my relationship with Him grown since then?
2. What religious activities or good works am I tempted to rely on instead of Christ's finished work?
3. What would it look like for Christ to truly be the "surpassing value" in every area of my life?
4. Where do I need to "press on" rather than coast spiritually?

### MEMORY VERSE

**Philippians 3:8** - "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."





## Sermon Transcript:

I know one thing's for certain, we're never going to say anything negative about the rain, right?

Yeah, all you have to do is think back about six years.

Yeah, we're very, very blessed.

So glad that you're here this morning.

If you have your Bibles with you, I want to invite you, if you would please, to open them to Philippians chapter 3.

And we're going to continue on in our study of the book of Philippians.

Paul writing this letter to a church that he loved and that he started.

And we're going to ask you to stand this morning, if you would please.

And before we read the word of God today, let's join together with our theme verse, I guess you could say, before we get into God's word.

And that is 2 Timothy 3, 16 through 17.

Maybe in another month we'll have this memorized, huh?

Yeah.

So if I don't mess it up this morning, we'll be all right, right?

Why don't you all just join with me?

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

What a blessing it is for us as Christians to come to the Word of God.

and this is the word of god today and we are not interested in man's opinion we have enough of that on every news anchor and social media platform out there but the reason we're here today is to hear from the word of god and we're going to trust that we're going to do that so what a blessing it is to have the truth and the bible says jesus says that the earth the heavens and the earth are all going to pass away but the word of god will last forever it will endure forever

And so we're reading the word of God this morning.

So would you join me and let's follow along together starting in verse 7 through verse 15 of chapter 3.

But whatever gain I had, Paul says, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Indeed, I count everything as a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Verse 2.

Verse 3.

Verse 4.

And I may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Paul continues in verse 12, not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

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 of the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that to you also.

Let me read just a few more verses since we're here.

Paul continues and says...

In verse 17,

with minds that are set on earthly things.

But Paul says, "...our citizenship is in heaven, and from it," heaven that is, "...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."

You all may be seated.

Thank you this morning.

We do want to invite and tell those that are watching online this morning, we're glad you've taken time to join us.

And for all of you that are listening by radio, we're so glad that you've also taken time to spend a few moments with us this morning.

Our theme for this section of scripture has been Paul's phrase, the surpassing value of knowing Christ.

As we're going to learn, and as we learned last week, we saw where Paul placed his value and what Paul placed value in.

The world has all kinds of things that they place their value in and their value upon.

In fact, before you came to Christ, like the Apostle Paul, there's one thing that was not the value of knowing, and that was Christ.

There is value in a lot of other things in your life, but Jesus Christ was not that which you placed any value whatsoever.

And that was actually the truth of the Apostle Paul.

We've already concluded and addressed the first two topics that Paul is writing about here in this passage, and we've looked at those the last few weeks.

And number one, we learned that Paul made it very, very clear that he wanted to warn the Philippian believers, and this applies to us as Christians today, about the dogs, these Judaizers that were bringing in this works-based religious system in the freedom of being in Christ.

So it wasn't just salvation by grace alone, through Christ alone, by faith alone.

It was actually that and then they added something to it like circumcision and keeping the Sabbath laws and the festivals.

And there are people today that put a great priority on those things.

And Paul says, listen, beware of these dogs.

And there's much of that taking place today.

We want to make sure that we stay focused as Christians on the true gospel because when you go off the gospel trail, you get into all kinds of dangerous territory.

Nonetheless, you've left the truth of the gospel and the only means of salvation.

So we want to stay focused as Paul is bringing them back to this constantly about this salvation, this gospel message.

So he warned about these religious deceivers, and we have many of those today that are in the business of deceiving people, maybe not knowingly in their own heart, but nonetheless they are doing so by teaching a gospel different than the apostle Paul taught and the word of God teaches, and that is we are saved by grace alone.

through faith alone, in Christ alone.

That is how we are justified before God.

You cannot add anything to the work of Christ to get merit in gaining God's approval in righteousness.

It's impossible.

We've covered that so much here.

I hope that you understand that.

If you think that you can gain the merit of God, God's love for you, God's approval of you by what you do, Paul says that our righteousness is but filthy rags.

It's worthless.

The only way we can attain the merit of God's justification, being right before God, is only by faith in Christ.

That is it.

And it's all a gift of God's grace.

We need to know that because it's very, very easy for us to want to do something to gain merit because we live in a society that we are all merited by what we do.

Now, I'm not saying that we're not saved unto good works, but that's not what produces my justification before God where I have been redeemed and I'm considered righteous before God.

It is only by faith in what Christ did, his finished work, his death, his burial, his resurrection, that is how we are made righteous before God.

We were purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ.

We've been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

We have been brought into the commonwealth of the family of God.

We have been adopted as sons and daughters of the living God.

We are in Christ because of our faith in what he has done, and he alone gets the glory for that.

I hope that you can begin to let that just begin to constantly remind you.

And the second thing we knew is Paul taught something very important, and that was last week we looked at Paul's past experience in religion.

Paul laid out for us here what he really put stock in, what he considered in the value column.

You know, those of you that still keep checkbooks...

Some of you probably still do.

With all the stuff we have today, it's all online and there's different ways of doing it.

But you know in business you've got an asset column and you also have a deficit column.

You have red and you have black.

And what Paul put in the asset column of his life was religion.

That's where Paul placed his value.

And there are many people today who place their value in religion.

But religion will never lead you to God.

You will never know God in religion.

You might know about him, but you'll never know him by experience simply by being involved in religious activity.

And so Paul laid out for us all of these things that he considered to be so valuable to him.

For example, his pedigree of his nationality, he was Jewish.

He came from the tribe of Benjamin.

He was a Jew of Jew.

His parents were godly Jewish people following the law, even had him circumcised, as the law said, on the eighth day.

Paul moves on from there, says, hey, not only that, but man, I was even a Pharisee.

I became one of the teachers of the law to the nation of Israel.

I was blameless in regards to the law.

In other words, I knew everything to do in response to the sacrificial system to make sure that I covered everything that needed to be covered.

I was blameless, Paul says.

And he laid out this incredible thing before us called his works righteousness under this religious system that had become something God never intended for it to become.

Where men would

do works and he would point out what others weren't doing and you go through the whole list of what Paul said and we learned that what Paul did is he now made an exchange because now Paul is going to share with us his brand new life of being in Christ Jesus.

And so now something has happened to the Apostle Paul.

And he wants to make it very, very clear what took place in his life.

And what we see here really is the internal things that happened in the Apostle Paul.

But if you really want to see what Paul's dealing with and what he's talking about, let's go back to Matthew real quick.

And Eric, you don't have these things, but these are just a little sidetrack that I'm going to take everybody on this morning.

Go back with me to Matthew chapter 16.

You have to understand that when Matthew here, this is the Gospels.

Christ had not yet gone to the cross.

Redemption had not been made.

He was still going to the people of Israel because Israel had not yet rejected Christ as they would.

And so he's speaking to national Israel here, the nation of Israel.

The apostles went out to the Jews.

I mean, you just read the stories.

These are all Jewish.

And this is what was happening prior to

Christ going to the cross of Calvary and making atonement for the sins of humanity.

and making a way for man to be brought right with God.

Christ will fulfill all the law.

He'll do absolutely everything that needed to be done in order that man could be made right before God, because he would be the last sacrifice that ever would be made, and his life's blood would be the last blood that ever needed to be shed for the remission of sins.

For the remission of sins, without it, there is no remission of sins without the shedding of blood.

And so it was the Jewish system was built on the sacrificial system that was pointing to Jesus who would fulfill the sacrificial system.

And so the Jews would rely on faith in the transaction of what happened.

An innocent animal without any sin, that blood would be shed to atone, if you will, not to make them pure, but to cover the sin, if you will.

God required the shedding of innocent blood, so they would put faith in that, that that sacrifice would then make them right before God because of the shedding of blood.

But when Jesus came, he was the fulfillment of the entire system of sacrifice that had been given to the nation of Israel.

But in chapter 16, verse 25, what we're going to learn about here is this incredible exchange that happened to the apostle Paul.

And this is an exchange that has happened to you and is happening to you as you go through the process of sanctification from the time of your justification, this whole life experience of living with Christ, growing in Christ, becoming more like Christ.

As we live this life, as we know Christ by experience, as he works in our life, as we work out what God is working in us, we are in a transformation process in our life.

And the Apostle Paul is going to share that here in Philippians 3.

But in Matthew 16, in verses 25 and 26, let me start at 24.

Let me just show you what Jesus said.

Then Jesus told his disciples...

If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.

For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

For what will it profit, and this is the question, what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and yet forfeits his soul?

Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

Do you not know that your soul has incredible value?

It's the most valuable thing that you actually have outside of Christ.

It's your soul.

Why?

Because the soul is going to go somewhere for eternity.

The soul is very important.

And the question he's asking is, what good is it if a man gains the whole world, and yet at the end of it all, he loses his soul?

And then he says, and what would a man give in exchange for this?

What would he give?

For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.

We know that day is coming in the future, that Jesus Christ will come a second time.

And he's speaking about his second coming, that he's going to come and he's going to pay each man according to what he has done.

And so what's the value of the soul?

Well, we know what the value of the soul is.

Christ paid the price for the value of purchasing the souls of men and women.

It's very valuable.

That's why when we go out into our world, the way that we look at people, it's very difficult for us in our flesh to look at people and to have compassion and to have love on those who are living such a reprobate mindset.

It's very difficult for us.

But if we could look past the activity of what they do and realize that literally they're a soul,

And there is a place where every soul will go.

We'll either go one to heaven or one to hell, the lake of fire.

That's the two places.

So the lost individual is doing what lost individuals do and what you and I did before we came to Christ.

We are doing those things that do not honor God, but actually honor and glorify the flesh.

And so we have to look at the world in a little different light.

It's not easy.

It's something that we have to do through the Spirit of God, and we have to look at people as a soul.

It's important to be reminded of that.

So he's coming, and he's going to give to each person according to what he does.

And then in verse 28 it says, Truly I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.

We know that happened six days later on the Mount of Transfiguration when he took three of his apostles with him, and they saw him transformed right before their eyes there.

The next place I want you to go to is Matthew chapter 13, 44 through 45.

We're going to flip right back just a few pages in your Bible.

It's actually on page 1,849 in mine, so I wouldn't advise you going there unless you have the Bible I'm using.

So what is this value that Paul's talking about?

How can he say that the surpassing value of knowing Christ has exchanged everything in the column that I held as important, as an asset of great value?

Paul says, when I came to encounter Christ, something happened.

There was an exchange that I made, and everything on the asset column that I thought and that I believed and I lived for as important all of a sudden was brought clear to the bottom, moved over here to the other column, and Jesus Christ is put there as the surpassing value of my life.

How did that happen?

Well, Paul's going to share with us how that took place.

Here's another example of what this would look like, and Jesus shares about this in these parables, but in Matthew chapter 13, there's really just two verses we're going to look at here, and they're going to explain two little parables.

The kingdom of heaven is like something.

It's like a treasure.

How many of you like treasures?

I always have thought that it would be awesome to do some treasure hunting.

Wouldn't that be great if that was your life?

You travel around the world and look for treasure.

Wouldn't that be rough?

Where are you at today?

Oh, you'd never believe.

I just found a very big thing of gold.

I mean, just incredible.

I think that would be awesome.

But Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field.

This is how valuable this is, the exchange.

Why did Paul do this?

It's a no-brainer.

which a man found this treasure.

It was hidden in a field, and he covered it back up.

Then in his joy, he goes, he sells absolutely everything that he had that he thought was valuable, everything he had.

He sells all of that.

Then he goes back to where the treasure is buried, and what does he do?

He buys the field.

That's the value here.

Jesus also says that in the next verse, and again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who on finding one pearl of great value went and sold all that he had, and he bought that one pearl.

In Matthew chapter 19, flip back the other way with me just a few chapters, we're going to meet a young man talking about the kingdom of

When he encounters Christ, he asks a question of Christ.

It's the parable here.

It's a story of a man that was very, very wealthy in the things of the world.

Nothing wrong with having worldly wealth as long as it's not your surpassing value.

We can use those things for the kingdom of God and understand the importance of that.

But here's a rich young man in chapter 19, starting in verse 16.

It says, Isn't that what people want to know?

What deeds do I need to do, man?

Just give me a list and I'll do them.

Trust me, religion will give you a list of deeds.

In fact, when you attend that church, whatever church that that is, whether it's a Protestant or whatever, you're going to be given a list of deeds.

This is what you must do.

The gospel, we didn't have a list of deeds given.

The gospel is by grace.

It's free to man.

been already provided in Christ.

And he says, moving on here, and Jesus says to him, why do you ask me about what is good?

There is only one who is good.

Jesus Christ is good.

If you would enter life, keep the commandments.

He's talking to this Jewish guy.

Well, sure, I keep the commandments.

Which ones?

And Jesus said, you shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness.

He's going through the law here, the original 10.

Honor your father and mother, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And the rich young man here, what does he say?

All these I've kept, I've got that one down, covered it.

Oh, hold on.

There's more than these, Jesus says.

There's one here that we've got a problem with.

He says, what do I still lack?

And Jesus said to him, if you would be perfect, right?

Go sell your possessions and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and come and follow me.

When the young man heard this, he went away sorrowful.

For why?

Because he had the wrong things in the wrong column.

His value was in the things of the world.

And we see this happen today when the gospel message goes out.

There are those that have the gospel message presented to them.

They hear the gospel message of Jesus Christ, but then they realize there's going to need to be an exchange.

I'll never forget one trip that we were in Bangladesh, and we were on an island there, and we were going from village to village to village to village, and we would simply preach the gospel.

We would do different acts of goodness as far as medical things, and we would pray with people, and we'd give eyeglasses away, and the people would come from miles just to get a Tylenol.

I mean, it was incredible.

what would happen.

Wait in line for hours just wanting to have something given to them.

Some of them we could help, some of them were very, very serious, and we could not, with the medical team we had, do that.

But nonetheless, I'll never forget this guy, and there's a lot of different things that go on in those countries, no different than here.

Black magic and all of that stuff's a reality.

Demoniacs and so on and so forth are a reality, but nonetheless, we were

walking on this dirt trail and we were going to another village and we come and these people are just you're an american they just want to see you they want to come out and take a look at you and to visit with you and so on and so forth we get to this one guy's home and he comes out of his little hut there and and he is a wealthy man by the standards of those that live on the island

And there's a way that he made his revenue, his money.

And it happened to be a tree.

You can imagine this.

Some of you have some mesquite trees you'd love to give away for free, right?

But this man here had a tree, and it was a big tree in the front of his little area there.

And I noticed on this tree there were things hung all over it.

In fact, there was even a box there, and this box had a lock on it, and he began to tell us about his wealth and about what he did to make money on the island, and this is what he did.

His tree was a powerful tree.

And the people of the island, he had helped believe that if they would come and they would give money to this tree, put it in the box, whatever ailment they had, whatever problem they had, they're already wearing these things around their neck to keep demon spirits away.

They got black dots on them.

They're in Hinduism and all kinds of weird stuff.

And they're really people that are fearful of many things.

And so they would bring money to this tree and then they would be healed is the whole story of how this would work.

And so his entire life was about using this tree, supposed power of the tree, and people would bring money to it, and then he was wealthy from it.

Sounds like some of our TV preachers today.

But nonetheless, they just do it on a bigger level.

And so we just simply stopped and shared the gospel with this man.

The truth of the gospel, right through the gospel message of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I will never forget this.

And when my translator there, when he finished sharing the gospel, and I think I've shared this before, but it is as if literally I had just punched this man square in the nose.

His eyes just were, they were huge.

He stood there in utter just amazement.

And you know what he said to me?

I have to make a decision.

How in the world did he know that?

See, because the gospel has power.

And when the gospel of Christ, the living God, when it penetrated and went in to the very marrow of the heart and the soul of this individual, it's the gospel, listen, it's the only thing that has the power to change lives.

So Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel for it's the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.

And the word of God is a double-edged sword.

And when you preach the gospel, it's going to accomplish.

It's going to cut one way and cut the other way.

And men are left with a responsibility.

What will I do with this Jesus?

That man...

He had to make a decision.

I didn't tell him he had to make a decision, but something in him said, I've got to choose today.

What am I going to do?

I hold my value here.

How did this happen in literally 10 minutes?

I only can tell you it's by the Spirit of God.

He went from the tree is my entire value.

It's my life.

It's how I take care of my family.

It gives me esteem in this village.

People come from miles around to this tree because it has power to do certain things.

He went from that in the category of everything he hung his hat on to all of a sudden, here's Jesus.

And he has to make an exchange.

And he says, I have to make a decision.

Yes.

And the man made a decision.

He took the value of the tree, threw it down here, and for some reason, only by the grace of God, through the power of the gospel, not the messenger, but the message of the gospel, the Holy Spirit regenerated this man.

I'm talking like within just this amount of time.

He moved from the column of something he just experienced.

He was all in religion.

It went to the bottom and Jesus Christ got put in the category of the value, the surpassing value of knowing Christ.

How did that happen?

By the power of the gospel.

That's how it happened.

Only God gets the glory for those things.

This is what happened to the apostle Paul.

Go with me if you would to Acts chapter 9.

They took the clock down.

That's real funny.

Okay.

Okay.

All right.

You asked for it.

I don't know what time it is.

We're rolling.

Just kidding.

Okay.

Well, I got my hat still on.

Good night.

Here we go.

Apologize for that.

I'm sorry.

I should have taken that off when I started.

Go with me to Acts chapter 9.

As you're going to learn...

Paul's going to tell us what was really going on inside of him when all this was happening in Acts chapter 9.

And not only then, but what was happening in his life as he now has been walking with Christ.

How could Paul say, everything in my life is like a pile of horse manure in comparison to the value of knowing Jesus Christ?

Listen to what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus.

This is his conversion story.

In Acts chapter 9, Paul here in verse 1, his name is still Saul.

He's back in this religion of what we learned about last week.

He's a Pharisee.

He is so zealous for God.

He's living this perfect life in Judaism, following every single step, making sure he does it all right.

He's all just completely saturated with religion.

And I know people today...

who are so overwhelmingly saturated with religion that they know something of God, but they don't even begin to know God.

They don't know him.

And listen to what happened.

Paul here in verse 1, still breathing threats and murder against who?

The disciples of the Lord.

Paul was very zealous for God in this regard.

He was doing everything he could do to get rid of this sect called the way.

That's what they called the early Christians, the way.

The way, the truth, and the life.

That's what Jesus is.

He didn't like that very well.

Didn't like Christ.

Didn't like this new freedom that they'd found in Christ.

And this is what it says.

So now...

He goes to the high priest and he asks him for letters to the synagogues of Damascus so that if he found any belonging to the way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

He's going to put them on trial before the Sanhedrin and the high priest.

Now he went on his way.

He approached Damascus and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him.

This reminds me of Bangladesh right here.

I saw this happen many times.

After falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

Not persecuting my disciples.

Not persecuting my church, but when you're persecuting my disciples and you're persecuting my church, Jesus says, you are actually persecuting me.

Look what Paul's response is.

Who are you, Lord?

The very religion that was pointing to Jesus all along.

Paul had it all down to a T. And yet he didn't even know who it was he was speaking to.

Jesus, he is the fulfillment of everything in the Old Testament.

He created all things.

He's everywhere in the Old Testament.

And yet Paul and the nation of Israel didn't recognize Jesus for the religion they were in.

Who are you, Lord?

He knew that much.

And he said to him, listen, do you remember when this happened to you?

Your name is called by God and you knew God was speaking to you.

You remember that?

Paul, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what to do next.

Something happened to the Apostle Paul.

You know what happened?

He encountered Christ.

He encountered Christ.

In fact, in verse 10, we know something happened.

It's not going to tell us what was going on internally in Paul, but in Philippians chapter 3, we see the things that were happening in Paul's life internally, in his mind, in his heart, processing the things.

He's now blind for three days.

He hasn't eaten and he hasn't drank anything.

Trust me, you probably would not have either.

And Paul says here in verse 10, we see this though, that the Lord tells Ananias that he's to go and meet this man.

And we notice that in verse 10, Paul's praying here.

Forget food, forget water.

I got to pray here.

Something I've got to figure out here.

What's going on?

By the time you get to verse 20, all of a sudden, this man who was going throughout the entire region, having Christians enslaved and some of them, even like Stephen, being stoned to death as Paul held the clothes of those men who stoned Stephen, who looked up into heaven and he saw heaven open and the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, was standing at the right hand of the Father saying,

This Paul, Saul, was standing there giving his approval as they stoned this man, Stephen.  
Here he is now.

He's encountered this Christ.

We see, though, in verse 20, there's something already going on.

And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogue.

Here he gets letters to go to the synagogues, the Jewish synagogues, and he is looking for whoever says they're part of the way.

Maybe he's going to talk to some of the ladies there.

He's going to get the inside scoop.

Hey, you know anybody here that claims this?

Maybe some of the men.

Here is this same Paul.

There's something majorly has happened here.

And he is not only not going to get people who are part of the way, he is part of the way.

He has come to know Christ.

If you're here this morning and you know Jesus, you're part of God's family.

You're one of the chosen people of God.

Isn't that not incredible?

It's amazing.

So now he's in the synagogue, and what is he doing?

He's proclaiming that Jesus Christ is God.

Incredible.

In verse 23, we see this already just a few days away, and now instead of him trying to kill Christians, we have Jews trying to kill him.

Some of you know what that feels like, not physically, but, you know, just on a smaller level.

And then in verse 28, now he goes to Jerusalem, the very place, the most dangerous place for Paul to go would have been Jerusalem.

They knew Paul in Jerusalem.

He was one of the Pharisees.

And here is Paul in Jerusalem trying to get together with the other disciples there, but they knew who he was and they were scared to death of him.

Some of you have come out of a rough way of life and you try to get around God's people.

What do they do?

They scatter.

They don't want to be around you, but they don't realize you're just like they are.

And now he's preaching boldly in the name of Jesus, and he's doing this right in Jerusalem.

What happened to Paul?

He made the exchange, folks.

He encountered Christ and he made an incredible exchange.

And we learned about what he knew in religion, but let's move along here now as time allows us and we'll not wrap this up today.

There's no way we're gonna get through this today.

Something very important that I want you to see what Paul is getting at here.

This surpassing value

When Paul encountered Christ, something happened to the Apostle Paul.

Something changed in here.

And this is what we read about in Philippians chapter 3.

You can see a little bit about what happened to the Apostle Paul as he's moving his way through here.

And he told us of what he was and what was so important and all the religious aspects of his life.

But when you get to verse 7, listen to what Paul says.

Whatever gain I had, Paul says, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

See, that's the value of Christ.

What's the value of a soul?

Christ showed us what that value was.

He showed us what that was.

Let me jump ahead here so we can get through some of this this week.

When Paul is talking about for the sake of Christ, he says, whatever former things were gains to me, as I then thought, these things once regarded as advancements and merits.

Maybe for you it wasn't religion.

For some of you it was religion.

You thought if you covered these five steps and went through these things and did that, that somehow they told you that you would be right with God.

But at the end of the day, you didn't know God any more than you knew the goose that was flying north for the winter.

Because Paul here is talking about an intimacy here.

He's not talking about a distant relationship where you've got to go through different things to get to God.

We have Christ who is our high priest.

He is our mediator.

He is our savior and our redeemer.  
He is all those things.  
And so here we have this.  
Paul says, listen, I count all that stuff.  
Whatever I thought was valuable, it's gone down.  
And what I put now was this exchange, as we're going to see here in a minute.  
It's moved Jesus Christ over.  
And Paul says, listen, this is my entire goal.  
This is my entire joy.  
This is what my whole life is really about.  
It's about knowing Jesus.  
Knowing Jesus.  
You will never find that in religion.  
Ever.  
Because they'll tell you, you can't know God.  
Yes, you can.  
Christ is God, by the way.  
God came to earth, lived upon the earth.  
Jesus is the invisible image of the invisible God.  
Jesus told his disciples, if you've seen me, you have seen the Father.  
You want to know about how compassionate I am, how loving I am.  
You want to know what God is like.  
Not only that, he sent his spirit to live inside of us.  
How more intimate can you get than that?  
Do not believe for a second that you can't know God.  
You can if you're a Christian and you will.  
Why?  
Because the Spirit of God is in you.  
And he's teaching you.  
And he's helping you.  
And he's praying for you.  
And he's convincing you and convicting you.  
He's doing all those things.

Why?

Because he is love.

He loves you.

Not only does he love you, he is the very spirit of Christ, the very spirit of God, living inside of you.

Now we go from justification.

Oh, Christian, don't stop at justification.

That's like coming to your wedding and going through the vows.

We had a wedding here this week.

Young couples up here, they go through their vows.

It's like saying, I do kiss the bride.

And guess what?

They leave and go to their separate homes and go on and live life.

How stinking crazy would that be?

be idiotic, wouldn't it?

That's what some Christians do when they come to justification.

Oh, they're joyfully receiving the justification being made right before God.

But they have to understand, you just don't do life as normal.

Now you walk with Christ through living the new life in Christ Jesus.

This is salvation.

This is intimacy and growing and knowing your Savior, Jesus Christ.

How many of you would want to do that in your marriage?

Get married and hit the road, Jack.

Are you kidding me?

You know what you do?

You go on your honeymoon, don't you?

Absolutely you do.

And then you what?

You move in a home together, don't you?

Yes.

Then what do you do?

You do your life together.

Let me show you what else happens.

We have a thing in every wedding ceremony, and most of them, they have this thing.

It's a unity period of time.

We have two things that are burning, two candles, if you will, and there's one candle in the middle.

What's very interesting, whether it's a sand ceremony, a candle ceremony, whatever it is, this is what it is.

Before you came to marry your spouse, you were your own candle, man.

But once you come and you marry your spouse in covenant, you're no longer yourself.

The Bible says a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife in the joining of a family that they become what?

One flesh.

They take a candle.

He takes this candle.

They pull them out.

The middle candle's lit.

What do they do?

What does that say?

There's no longer me.

From now on, it's we.

How well does it work when that situation dissolves and you've got now the husband, he's all about me, or the wife's all about me?

Are you kidding me?

That won't work for a New York minute.

I don't even know how long that is, but it's not very long.

This is what the beautiful thing is.

Do you know that we've come in union with Christ?

It's no longer just me anymore.

I still have my flesh.

What do you do as a husband?

And I know I bring up this analogy of marriage because it's one that Paul uses.

It is the physical outward expression of an inward work of God in us.

It's the picture of Christ in the church, the husband and the wife.

It's why I use this.

Why is this so critically important?

Because what we do, we are now what?

We're married.

Yes, we are together.

We are one, and we are living life and doing life together.

We're building a family and a home.

We're doing all these things together.

And what do you have to do, sir and ma'am, often in your marriage?

Deny something, don't you?

Do any of you ever have to deny yourself in marriage?

Yeah.

Yeah.

Do you know that I am in Christ Jesus?

I'm a new creation.

I still have a flesh.

Do you know what I have to do with my flesh?

Stomp it down on a daily basis.

Why?

Because I'm also new in Christ and the Spirit of God, the regenerated man, following the Holy Spirit of God.

It all leads to life.

And listen, husband and wife, you want to fix your marriage in about a New York minute?

That's quick, by the way.

You start denying yourself and you start pouring everything into your spouse.

You put her first.

You want to fix a problem quick?

That's how you do it.

Set aside your own pride, your own wants, whatever that is, set it aside, and you do what God says to do.

Love your wife like Christ loved the church.

Ma'am, you want to fix this real quick for your husband too?

Maybe you're the problem.

I don't know.

Submit to your husband as if unto the Lord.

You know what that requires of you?

Telling yourself no.

Shoving down your desires all the time, what you want, what you don't like about the guy.

You know, I mean, good night.

Let's go down the list.

Listen, push all that down and you look to your husband, you submit to him as if unto the Lord, and you show him honor and respect even when he's not worthy of it.

Do you know what you're going to do?

That'll wreck your man out, guaranteed.

That's the way God made it.

And this is what Paul is saying here.

When I came to know Christ, and I actually encountered the living God, I was in religion, man, I knew all about it, but I had never encountered God.

But when I, on that road to Damascus, encountered Christ, and he called me by name, and he told me what he, who and what he was, something drastically changed in my life.

All of a sudden, all that stuff that had value, it's nothing.

And Paul says, it's all nothing but dung compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

Well, I'd like to say that the apostle Paul arrived, but he tells us in this chapter, just a few verses down, and we have to close here for the sake of time.

By the way, he says, I haven't obtained all this.

Aren't you glad he put that in there?

He says, I haven't already been made perfect here.

But one thing I do, I forget what's behind.

In other words, I'm simply not going to rely on what I have today to skirt across the finish line.

How many of you want people running on your relay team that, you know what, they're only going to run in first gear no matter what?

No, I want somebody that is going to run with every ounce they have.

I don't care if the baton was passed to them and they're in third place when this thing starts.

You want someone that will finish the race with everything they have.

That's what Paul says.

I'm not content with where I'm at with Christ.

He goes, I want to know Christ even more than I know him now.

That should be the desire for us as Christians, to know Christ.

Is he the surpassing value of your life?

It's easy for those things in life to creep ahead of who Christ is and what he is, but he is the only true valuable thing that we have, amen?

He's worth buying a field with a treasure and selling all you have.

If you lost everything and you had Jesus, he is enough, amen?

He is.

We're going to close today.

We may get through this in the next month, but we'll work our way through there.

Remind you guys that there is a picnic in the covered arena.

For those of you that are going to take part in that, I want to remind you of that too.

I had several people ask me this about Godwin.

Just so you guys know, we will probably send something in way of help to Godwin sometime this week.

So today, if you're wanting to help Godwin in India and the need that they have there, just make that check to Texel McAvoy Church and we'll get that to him.

And so some of you were asking about that.

You can do that today as well as you prayed about that.

So thank you all so much for being here today.

Let's close in prayer.

Anybody needs prayer, the prayer room over here in the lodge is going to be open for you.

Maybe you're here and Jesus Christ is not the surpassing value in your life.

Maybe today you heard your name called and just like that man in Bangladesh,

He made the exchange happily, willingly because of Christ.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus, thank you so much for your word.

God, thank you for everyone that's here today and those that are watching and listening today.

Father, thank you that you're still saving men.

Lord, I want to thank you, God, that you're not a God that we cannot know.

tells us that we've been adopted into your family, that we are to call you Father, Abba Father, that's Daddy, and that we are in standing as a son or a daughter because of being in Christ this morning.

Lord, I pray that you would put within us a desire to know you more.

And Lord, part of knowing you more is simply living life, experiencing life, learning about your grace, your mercy, going through suffering, difficulties, all of things in life.

As we grow and mature and as we go through this process of being more and more forged into your image, God, that Lord, you would help us that there's a purpose in that, a far greater purpose, and that is that we would be conformed to the image of Christ.

And so, Lord, I pray that you would help us know that we have this immense privilege of actually knowing you by experience, not through a religious system, but by experience knowing you.

Thank you for that today, Lord.

I pray, Lord, that you would just minister to each one of us where we are, that your Holy Spirit would speak to each of our hearts, God, today.

I thank you for our church family.

I thank you for our fellowship time that follows this.

And Lord, we just pray that we would honor and glorify you in all that we do this day.

We pray in Christ's name, amen, amen.

God bless you guys.

We will see you hopefully in a few minutes.

This is my father's word.

Oh, the battle is not done.

It's Jesus.