

Place: Lurgan Baptist 8:3:2015

THE JOURNEY TO JOY

Reading: Philippians 3:1-11

12. GOING DEEPER WITH GOD

Warren Wiersbe is one of the most popular and well known Bible teachers in all of the world. He once made this incredible statement, “*After over forty years of ministry, I am convinced that spiritual immaturity is the number one problem in our churches.*” I heard the story of a little boy who fell out of bed in the middle of the night. When his mother rushed to his room to ask him what happened, he said, “*I don’t know. I guess I stayed too close to where I got in.*” You smile. I smile but we did not land on the hard floor. Nevertheless that is how it is with many of us who are the Lord’s people today. We stay too near to where we got in. Indeed for most of our lives we stay too close to where we got in. Charles Swindoll says, “*The secret lies in our returning to the basic disciplines of Christ. Religion won’t cut it. We live in a spiritual hothouse where we talk religious talk, send out religious letters, write religious pamphlets, and do religious Bible studies. It’s easy to become religious instead of godly.*”

Do you ever feel that you are just going through the motions ? Perhaps you sing without feeling, you listen without purpose, and you leave feeling as empty and unchanged as you did when you came ? Yet that could

never be said of Paul. When he became a Christian, it was not the end for Paul, but the beginning. He had met the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road, now he wants to know Him ! Do you see what he says ? “*That I might know Him,*” (3:10) Paul wants to go deeper with the Lord. I wonder have you this desire ? Is the Lord Jesus as precious to you as He once was ? Do you recall when you were first saved ? Your love and devotion for the Lord was growing and getting stronger each day. Do you recall when you would speak about the Lord and the fire of excitement would burn in your soul? Do you remember when your prayers were unrehearsed and untried and you truly felt His power as you communed with God ? Do you remember when God’s Word was a wonder book to you filled with amazing insights you had never know before ? Can you remember when your devotion to the Lord was consistent, enriching, fulfilling and deep ?

What happened ? My where is that desire for the Lord ? Do you see Paul’s desire ? He wants to “**Go Deeper with God.**” “*That I might know Him,*” What a goal Paul has in view. He renounces all in a personal passion for the closest intimacy and the fullest identity with Christ. People have lived with single-minded devotion to much lesser goals. For instance, Eliezer Ben Yehuda dedicated himself to the goal of reviving the Hebrew language: Sir Edmund Hillary devoted himself to pressing up steep and treacherous slopes to stand on the top of Mount Everest, Christopher Columbus set his face like a flint to sail westward, in spite of the threat of mutiny to find a new world. But Paul’s goal, his master passion, was Christ.

He had met the Lord Jesus, now he wanted to know Him. Do you recall that Moses was characterised by a desire to know God ? He says, “ *Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in Thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know Thee.* ” (Exod 33:13) David was marked by a desire to know God. He testifies to this in (Ps 42) when he says, “ *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God for the living God,* ” (Ps 42:1-2) Moses, David, Paul. Three names but one goal. A burning desire to know the Lord. To go deeper with God. Do you have this desire ? To know Christ ? To know Him intimately ? To awake with Him in the morning and to live each day with Him and in His presence. Now what was it exactly that Paul wanted to know ? Paul wanted to know,

(1) THE GLORIOUS PERSON OF CHRIST

Do you see what he says ? “ *That I may know Him.* ” (3:10) Paul wanted to know the Lord Jesus,

(a) INITIALLY:

As he says in (3:9) “ *And be found in Him,* ” you see, salvation is largely a matter of one's position. The unsaved man is without Christ, without God, without hope. (Eph 2:12) The saved man is “ *found in Him.* ” Indeed “ *knowing Christ,* ” is one of the New Testament's ways of describing saving faith. Do you recall what our Lord Jesus prayed in His great High Priestly prayer ? “ *And this is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ*

whom Thou hast sent.” (Jn 17:3) Those who know Christ have eternal life, those who do not know Him are without it. Tragically, there are many religious people who believe they are Christians and yet do not know Christ. (Matt 7:22-23) My do you really know Christ ? Are you in Him ? Is He in you ? Does He know you ? I think of an old godly Methodist woman years ago who lived in the United States. Her name was Clara Tear Williams. She lived in a one room shack, with a dirt floor, curtain walls and lighting courtesy of an oil lamp. She had a day's supply of food in the cup-bard and her money was found in a Tupperware bowl behind her bed. However one day a friend asked her to write a poem and this is what she wrote,

**All my life I had a longing
For a drink from some clear spring
That I hoped would quench the burning
Of the thirst I felt within**

**Hallelujah I have found Him
Whom my soul so long has craved
Jesus satisfies my longings
Through His blood I now am saved**

(b) INCREASINGLY:

Yes, he came to know Him on the Damascus Road but his continuing aim is to know him. “ *That I may know Him,* ” (3:10) Paul wanted to know the One who created the stars, the One who controls the universe, the One who knows all there is to know about space

technology, nuclear physics, biochemistry and electronics, the One who has lived down here, experienced life to the full, and tasted its joys, sorrows, possibilities and pains, the One who fully understands, loves and cares, encourages and forgives, the One who is good, patient, kind and helpful. My is there any greater goal in all the world than to know Christ ? To know Christ increasingly we must spend **Time** with Him. Do you remember when you started courting ? You met the girl that eventually became your wife, but you wanted to know her better. How did you do that ? By spending time with her. Someone has said, “ **You can never develop a relationship with God in a crowd.**” That fellowship with other believers is fine but tell me do you spend time with the Saviour ? To know Christ increasingly we must **Talk** to Him. As we do, our love for Him will grow and we will begin to be like Him. We will begin to think as He thinks, act as He acts, and say what He says.

To know Christ increasingly we must **Think** about Him. Paul says in (2 Cor 3:18) that we grow spiritually by “ *beholding the glory of the Lord.*” (2 Cor 3:18) In other words, we understand more of Christ as we concentrate on Christ. My spiritual growth is simply a process of the redirection of our concentration, changing it from self-concentration, success-concentration, past-failure concentration, money concentration, business concentration into Christ-concentration. Also Paul wanted to know Christ,

(c) **INTIMATELY:**

A mother ran into the bedroom when she heard her son screaming and found his two year old sister pulling his hair. She gently released the little girl’s grip and said to her son, “ *There darling, she didn’t mean it. She does not know that it hurts when she pulls your hair.*” The mother was barely out of the room when she heard the little girl scream. Rushing back into the room she asked. “ *What happened ?*” Her son said, “ *She knows now.*” **It is not the know of intellect, but the know of intimacy.** The word “ *know,*” here is an interesting word (*ginosko*) it means “ *to know by personal experience.*” When the Old Testament writers spoke about sexual relationship within the marriage bond, they would say that a man “ *knew his wife.*” This described the intimate, personal relationship of marriage. We read, “ *And Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived.*” (Gen 4:1) Now this is exactly the same word used here for knowing Christ. It speaks of a deep, intimate, personal relationship.

Do you see that girl you are engaged to ? You know her but you don’t know everything there is to know about her. I mean you know that she’s got teeth like stars but what you don’t know is they come out at night, and you’ll find that out when you get married. And, girls, you know that old boy that you’re going to get married to, you know he’s handsome but you don’t know that he bites his toenails in bed, but you’ll find that out when you get married. You see, when a couple get married, they may know much about each other, and this knowledge provides a basis for their marriage relationship. But isn’t that knowledge small in comparison to what it will be after they have lived

together many years and have really come to know each other. I heard about a young couple that got married *and the first week he listened to her, and the second week she listened to him, and the third week the neighbours listened to them both. They were just getting to know each other.* My as husband and wife you know each other intimately after all those years together. Tell me, how long are you saved ? Do you know Christ intimately ? As a musician was tuning his instrument prior to a concert, he held it for a few seconds before a flaming fireplace. Asked why he did this, he replied, “ *I can’t seem to get any music out of it when it’s cold.* ” In just the same way God’s children cannot produce the music of hearty service and worship when their lives are spiritually cold and unresponsive. My you can sing it as much as you want,

**Knowing you Jesus, knowing you
There is no greater thing**

But how well do you know Him ? For as Joe Stowell says, “ *The distance between knowing Him and knowing about Him separates the spectators from intimate participants.* ” (1)

(2) THE VICTORIOUS POWER OF CHRIST

It was a dream come true for the Frenchman who became an Englishman because he so admired the British way of life. An inquisitive friend asked him what significant difference his British citizenship had made to him. Pierre replied, “ *Well, among other*

things, I find that now instead of losing the Battle of Waterloo, I’ve won it. ” My we go forward in the victorious power of Christ. Sure, we have known the power of His resurrection in the **past**, at the precise moment of our conversion we were raised up with Christ and seated in heavenly places. (Eph 2:6) We will know the power of His resurrection in the **future** when our bodies will be raised at the Rapture. But we can know the power of His resurrection in the **present**. We can live 24/7 in the power of his resurrection. The stone is rolled away. Now we need this power,

(a) TO FACE DAILY CIRCUMSTANCES:

Believe it or not the same power that God used to raise Christ from the dead is available to every one of us. Paul wanted to know by experience this power. Do you recall what he says in (Eph 1:19) ? “ *And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead.* ” Paul wants to experience this same power surging through his own being overcoming sin in his life and producing Christian graces. One of the most intriguing stories in the Bible is Samson's. A man who had great power, but lost it because he disobeyed God. He assumed he still had his power, so when the Philistines attacked, he confronted them as he had before. This time he could not defend himself from them. The Holy Spirit explains why, “ *he wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* ” (Judges 16:20) My without the presence of the Lord, Samson did not have the power of the Lord. The power comes from God, and this power is available to

us. My are you tapping it ? Are you drawing on it ? Is your life plugged in and switched on. Do you know what's wrong with most of us ? ***We live as if Christ never rose from the dead.*** As if there were nothing better for the Christian than to be embalmed with the spices of spiritual defeat. My the blood-stained Warrior has broken the bands of death and wants to make that victory a living reality in our lives as we yield to Him. (a)

(b) TO FACE DISTRESSING CIRCUMSTANCES:

“ *That I might know him and the power of his resurrection.*” (3:1 0) Did you ever think of the effect resurrection power had on Mary ? What a state she is in. Peter and John have gone home but Mary's love for the Saviour kept her near the place where the Lord's body was seen. The Bible says, “ *But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping,*” (Jn 20:11) It's not merely that tears were trickling down her face she was convulsed with weeping. Can you see her ? Her heart is broken, her world is shattered, her hopes are gone, life seems all in vain. But now of the shadows there came a voice, a voice she knew, a voice she loved, a a voice she recognised. An unmistakable Voice. His Voice. The Masters Voice. “ **Mary.**”

Am I speaking to a troubled soul in this meeting ? Like Mary have you stood broken-hearted at an open grave ? Has death robbed you of a loved one ? Have you had to pass through personal crisis, domestic crisis, or business crisis. Listen, the Risen Lord Jesus is here this and He's wants to dry your tears, to let you

know that He's really and truly alive. My ... is this not wonderful that we can know this dynamic power, this spiritual semtex surging through us ? Enabling us to face, (a) (b) and enabling us,

(c) TO FACE DEMANDING CIRCUMSTANCES:

Before the Lord Jesus went to Gethsemane, Simon Peter in his self-confidence assured the Lord that no matter how many others denied Him, he never would. (Matt 26:33) That proud, boastful spirit suffered a speedy fall when Peter, warming his hands at the charcoal fire, faced the challenge of a serving maid.

“ *This man was also with him. And he denied him saying, Woman I know him not,*” (Lk 22:57) He failed the test and was crushed by his denial. With the Lord's last look haunting his soul, “ *Peter went out and wept bitterly.*” (Lk 22:62)

But then Peter entered into a knowledge of “ *the power of His resurrection.*” The Risen Lord met him. Where and when they met and what was said is all hidden from our view. The Holy Spirit quietly drew the curtain over that private scene, (1 Cor 15: 5) but do you recall the later public scene ? The fire of coals, the Lord's use of the old name Simon, the three fold question *recalled Peter's failure.* The Risen Lord asked, “ *Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?*”

(Jn 21:17) With that question the Risen Lord *rekindled Peter's fervour.* Then the Risen Christ gave Peter some instructions, “ *Feed my sheep follow me.*” With those commands the Lord *reshaped Peter's future.* My Peter never forgot that scene by the

lakeside. (2 Pet 1:14) And the memory of the occasion gave him power to face martyrdom. The source of Peter's power was Christ's resurrection. He had the assurance that Jesus Christ was really and truly alive. My ... are you facing demanding situations ? Is there anything more demanding than martyrdom ? Clement of Alexandria recorded that Peter and his wife who was his helper in the gospel were martyred together. Peter had the grim ordeal of seeing his wife suffer before him. When they came to Peter he said, " *Crucify me with my head downwards. My Master was crucified for me with his head upwards I am not worthy to die as he died.*" " *The power of His resurrection,*" do you need this to face those demanding circumstances ? (1) (2)

(3) THE MARVELLOUS PASSION OF CHRIST

Now remember we are talking about " Going Deeper with God," and that involves suffering, selflessness, and becoming more like the Saviour. Paul refers to it as,

(a) A PAINFUL EXPERIENCE:

Paul call's it " *the fellowship of His sufferings,*" (3:10) The word " *fellowship,*" means " *joint participation.*" Paul does not mean of course that he wants to share in Christ's substitutionary sufferings for they are finished. (Heb 10:12) But though the work of Christ is finished, suffering for the sake of Christ and His cause continues. My Paul knew it was a privilege to suffer for Christ. (1:29-30) In fact,

suffering had been part of his experience from the very beginning. (Acts 9:16) The Lord had said to Ananias concerning Saul, " *I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*" Paul had been a persecutor at one time, but he learned what it means to be persecuted. Why is it that so few of us suffer for Christ ? Is it because so few of us have an all out allegiance to Him ? Is it because we are unwilling to go without the camp and bear His reproach ? Someone has said, " *the problem with Christians these days is no one wants to kill them.*" Such persecution would melt us down to the bare essentials of what it means to be a genuine follower of the Lamb. (a) But then Paul talks about,

(b) A PURPOSEFUL EXPERIENCE:

" *Being made conformable unto His death,*" (3:10) Now doubt this means dying to self. (Gal 2:20) George Mueller was once asked the secret of his life. He replied, " *There was a day when I died. Died to George Mueller his opinions, preferences, tastes and will, died to the world its approval or censure, died to the approval or blame even of my brethren or friends and since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.*" But there is something else here. You see, just as Christ died for the purpose of redeeming sinners, so this man Paul would live and die for the purpose of reaching sinners. Oh, with Christ-like passion Paul wept and told the Lord he would be willing to go to Hell if his going there could lead to the conversion of the Jewish people. (Rom 9:1-3) My do you want to go deeper with God ? Well, how like

Christ are you when it comes to the lost ? Have you a concern for souls ? Oh, for tear-filled eyes, oh for sleepless eyes because of the imminent danger and doom of the lost. Many of us have boys and girls, Mums and Dads, kith and kin “ *out of Christ without a Saviour.*” Briefly we mention their names in prayer, but where is the passion, the agony, the “ *strong crying and tears,*” for their souls ? General Booth received a message from one of his captains that the work was so hard he could make no progress. The General sent back a reply of two words, “ *Try tears.*” Blessing visited that area. My ... do you know what it is “ *to be made conformable to his death ?*” To have love, pure Calvary love to bring the lost to Christ ? (a) (b)

(c) A PERFECT EXPERIENCE:

Do you see what he says ? “ *If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*” (3:11) Now we must not understand this to mean that Paul was afraid for his eternal security. For he has already told us in (1:6) that God will bring him safely to heaven. Also I don't think that Paul is referring here to the future resurrection of the physical body of the believer. No, rather Paul is saying that he wished to be so like Christ in the way he lived that people would think of him as a resurrected person even now, even before his physical death. It's interesting to note that this is the only place in the New Testament where this particular form of the Greek word for “ *resurrection,*” is used. Literally it means “ *the out-resurrection.*” You see, Paul's aim even now is complete conformity to Christ. Oh, he knows that absolute perfection will not be

attained until the “ *coming of the Lord.*” (3:20) But this is his goal even now. Right now he wants to live that transfigured life, he wants to be a preview of the glorious resurrection in the coming Day of days. Paul says, “ *As I walk your streets, as I walk into your homes, as I mingle among the sons of men, I want to be so living for Christ, so outstanding for Him that you can see I am a living one among the dead ones.*”

Going Deeper with God. Are you ? Do you more Christ more intimately ? Are you drawing on His resurrection power more increasingly ? Are you entering into His sufferings more personally ? Are you being conformed to His image more completely ?

**The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you
The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you
I want to know you more, I want to know you more
The greatest thing in all my life is knowing you**

Do you recall the wee boy falling out of the bed ? I cannot help but ask but ask myself the question. “ **Am I staying too near where I got in ?**” What about you ?