

**Joy When Life is Tough - Philippians**  
**Part 6**  
**“Knowing Christ”**  
**Philippians 3:10-14**  
**Pastor Charles Price**

I first met my wife when she was in a corridor cleaning the floor, and I walked by. I'd never, ever seen her before, and as far as I know, all I said to her was Hi, and she said, hi, but it was love at first sight for me anyway. I wrote to a friend that night and I said to my friend, I think I've met the girl I'm going to marry, but I don't know her name yet and I know nothing about her now. I didn't write letters like that very often, just once a month or so. No, I didn't actually, that was the first time ever I'd written a letter like that.

I eventually found out her name. I tried to get to know her a little bit. One of the first things I discovered was she had a boyfriend, so I put him on my prayer list. She had no interest in me at all. That was 23 years ago, and lots and lots has happened since then. I now know her name. I know her family. I know her interests. I know how she feels and responds to things. But although I've known her now for 23 years, there are still lots and lots of things about her I don't know and I'll probably never know this side of heaven, if I'm privileged to get to know it even then, because she's pretty complex.

Why am I telling you that? Because that is what Paul is talking about in Philippians 3 regarding his knowledge of Christ. We've been looking at this letter to the Philippians for a number of weeks now, and here in Philippians 3, Paul talks about having a righteousness, which we talked about last week. Righteousness means rightness, the ability to become right and the ability to behave right.

He talks about having a righteousness that does not come from the law; that is doing my best for God, but comes from faith in Christ, and we define faith as a disposition towards an object that allows the object to work on my behalf.

If I put faith in the chair, you remember, I let the chair do something for me. The chair holds me in place. I don't do something for the chair, the chair does something for me. I put faith in the car, I let the car do something for me. The car takes me down the road, I don't do anything for the car. I can go to sleep on the back seat, but the car does something for me, it takes me down the road.

If you put faith in God, it's nothing to do with what we do for God. This chapter says in the early part, we put no confidence in the flesh, that's in human effort (Philippians 3:4). But, it's a disposition towards Jesus Christ that says, I cannot do anything about this myself, but you can. By you having come in order to reconcile me to God to your death, and then to impart to me strength and power. So, your risen life which you impart to me, that's what we talked about last week. Now, it follows then that the more convinced we are of the object of our faith, the more confident we're going to become in the exercise of our faith. What do I mean by that, the more convinced we are of the object of our faith, the more confident we become in the exercise of our faith?

If I were to make a journey from Toronto to Vancouver, and I was offered the choice of either driving in a brand-new Mercedes Benz or in a 1960 Volkswagen Beetle, I am more likely to choose the Mercedes Benz. Why? Because the more convinced I am of the object of my faith,

I'm more convinced of the Mercedes than I am of the Volkswagen, the more confident I'll become in the exercise of the faith. Does that make sense? Some of you look as though it doesn't, but that's OK. But the same is true of Christ, and that's the point we're coming to.

Paul says, because the Christian life derives from dependency on Jesus Christ. Therefore, in [Philippians 3:10-11](#), "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead."

I want to talk about these verses this morning. Four things Paul says here about knowing Christ. Four things need to be true of you and me if our Christian life is going to be more than just I'm not sure what his name is, but I know there's a God somewhere; to that deepening, intimate relationship, whereby we know him, we love him and we're secure with him. Four things, first of all, Paul says, I want to know him personally. That's the first thing I want to talk about. I want to know him, says Paul!

This is the key to everything else. Earlier in [Philippians 3:8](#), he says, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ, Jesus, my lord. Nothing else is of value outside of this, he says, or in comparison to this, knowing Christ, my lord." You see, in the first instance, the Christian life is not an experience. There are experiences involved. It is not feelings, though very often there are feelings involved. But the Christian life in the first instance is a relationship.

Jesus defined eternal life in [John 17:3](#) when he was praying to his father, he said, this is life eternal that they may know you and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. Eternal life said Jesus, is knowing God and it's knowing Christ. Now how do we know Christ? How do we know God? I want to suggest three ways you can know him. First of all, you can know him intellectually. You can know a human being that way, you can know a human being intellectually. That is, you can know all about them without any real personal encounter of them.

For instance, I know all about Queen Elizabeth. I can tell you lots of facts about her. She was born in 1926. I had to look that up in the Encyclopedia Britannica. But I knew it was roughly around then. She is married to a man called Philip. They have four children and six grandchildren. She lives in a big house in central London, and she has what you Canadians call Cottages, in Windsor and Scotland at Balmoral and in Norfolk. Don't you call the place you go to weekends Cottages in Canada? Well, she has a few of those around that are a bit bigger than yours probably. I know what she looks like, because her picture is everywhere. Her profile appears on every coin in Canada and on \$20 bills, and her pictures hang in the post offices and places like that. I know lots of what there is to know about Queen Elizabeth, but if you were to meet her one day and say to her. Oh, excuse me, Charles Price sends you his greetings. She'd say, who in the world is that?

Because although I have a knowledge of her, there's no relationship. She doesn't know I exist, she wasn't sorry when I left England, she didn't know I left. We never told her. But, you know, you can know Christ on that level. You can recite the creed, which gives the historical details about him, and you can believe them. You can believe he was born in Bethlehem. You can

believe he lived a perfect life. He was baptized at the age of 30. He began his ministry. He went about doing good. He healed the sick, he raised the dead, he cleansed lepers. He preached a message which transformed the people and turned them upside down.

And you can know that they arrested him after three years and they crucified him and they buried him, put a stone on the tomb. On the third day, he was raised again from the dead and 40 days later, he ascended to his father. And you can believe all of that, but there's no relationship. You see, there's no joy in knowledge that is purely intellectual in this sense, knowing what I know about the Queen doesn't light my fire. Knowing what you know about Jesus may not light your fire.

It simply enables you to answer questions people might ask you, that's all. You can know somebody intellectually, that's the first area of knowledge. Secondly, you know somebody intermittently. By that, I mean this, you can have some measure of relationship with somebody. But it is intermittent. You crossed their paths once in a while, you chat once in a while, but you know very little about them. It's the kind of relationship you might have with your dentist. The less you meet him the better, you probably hope. And although you may know him, if you saw him on the street, you might acknowledge him. And when you sit in his chair, of course, he always asks you questions that require an answer and you can't answer him, except, you know, by saying things like, wah wah wah wah. Which doesn't help. But you don't call him up on Christmas morning to say Happy Christmas to him because you don't have that kind of relationship with him. When you come to visit him, he has to check his records to find out who is this person and

what did I do last time. What's their problem? Oh, yes, that's right. When you walk in, he pretends he knew all along. He doesn't really know you.

You can have that kind of relationship with Christ. You can say, yes, there was a day in my life when I came to know Christ, I can remember it. You might recall very vividly the day you were converted, but you know that along the way, somehow your relationship has become a very intermittent one, a very distant one. He doesn't light your fire anymore. You can know Christ, that way.

Or thirdly, you can know somebody intimately. This is the relationship where nothing is hidden, where everything is open and known. This is the kind of relationship that has bearing on every major decision of your life. Now, I know my wife and my children that way. I'm in daily communication with them, and without them there's a sense of being bereft. When I go away, I look forward to getting back home again, because it's not just some intellectual awareness of them. My heart is involved in this relationship and I love them, and it's intimate and it's detailed. You can have this kind of relationship with Christ as well. This is the kind of relationship Paul is talking about when he says, I want to know Christ. It's not just I want more theology to help me understand more facts about him.

Paul was probably one of the greatest theologians that ever was. In fact, the rest of us get our information from Paul by and large. He wasn't saying, I need more doctrine, more theology. He's meaning I want to know Him more deeply, because this is the kind of relationship which never reaches its end or its culmination.

As with my wife, there'll never be a day when I'll say, 'At last I know everything there is to know about Hillary now. Phew, there's nothing more to discover.' No, no, every week there are new surprises. Big ones sometimes. Mostly good ones. Not always. And she discovers the same things about me and the same it is with Christ. You may know him, you may know him well, but there's more to know. This is part of the adventure of being a Christian, but you see one of the most important things in your Christian life is developing that relationship and getting to know him better. And you know, many of us as Christians try and get by on an intermittent weekly encounter, turn up on Sunday morning, but how often do we open this book and spend time saying to God, please reveal Jesus to me again through this book?

See, if you're hungry, he's the bread of life, so you have to find Christ. He alone will satisfy you. If you're in darkness, you need enlightenment. He's the light of the world. He alone can bring that to you. If you're confused about where you're going, he is the good shepherd. He's the one you need to be in touch with. If you need liberation, he is the life. He's the one you need to know. And, you know, relationships don't grow unless there's time spent deliberately pursuing that relationship and deepening that relationship.

One of the things the Bible tells us about God is, he has both ears and lips. He listens and he speaks. One of the privileges that belongs to you and to me is to spend time talking, that he might listen and listening so he might speak to us. And our knowledge of him and our experience of him grows. All relationships grow in the measure to which the communication is good.

My wife and I spent the other evening with the younger married group from this church, and we talked about communication. The reason why we talked about it is because we need to learn to communicate better. And so, telling somebody else something means you help yourself. But we need to learn to communicate and listen to God better if our relationship with him is going to grow.

I mean, can you imagine, for a silly illustration; can you imagine a couple getting married and at the end of the wedding meal you are drawing towards the end, the bridegroom turns to his bride and he says, I really enjoyed that meal. Would you please thank your parents for putting it on for us. I would have thanked them myself, except that I have arranged with a friend of mine to play golf this afternoon and I thought this would have been over by now, but the photographs took longer than I thought they would, so I'm going to have to go, would you thank them.

And after we've had this game of golf, we're going out for a meal, so I'll be back later and I'll see you sometime tonight. Is that OK? Bye bye and off he goes. You can imagine this; you need a good imagination for this. He comes home late that night, makes himself a cup of coffee. He's halfway through his cup of coffee and says to himself, Oh, I just remembered I got married today. I forgot about that. Where is she? Oh, there she is. Hi, I'd forgotten about you, I'm not used to having you here you know.

Look, I am just beat, I'm exhausted, it has been a long day. I'm off to bed, I'll see you in the morning. Imagine that. He gets up the next morning, makes himself a cup of coffee, halfway through his cup of coffee he says to himself, Oh, I just remembered, I've got a wife. Oh, there you are, I didn't notice you there, you haven't been here before, did you sleep well? Good, I'm



out today. I'm busy all day and in fact I won't be back till tomorrow probably, because I'm doing some business and I'm going to be away, but I'll see you sometime. Just imagine that kind of relationship, and you met that man or his wife about three months later and said, Hey, how are you enjoying being married?

Would it surprise you if they said, Hey, this marriage is dull. Of course it's dull. It's not working. Of course it's not working, but you know something, that's exactly how many Christians treat God. We get up in the morning, we have a quick good morning God. Please look after me today. Please bless me. Give me everything I need. Amen. Before you go to bed at night, we have a quick please, thank you. We say, thank you for looking after me today. Please give me a good sleep tonight. Take away my nightmares. Bless all the missionaries and save everybody else. Amen. It takes about 30 seconds a day. And if somebody were to ask you, how are you enjoying Jesus Christ, the question itself may be an embarrassment to you. Enjoying Jesus Christ, what do you mean?

You see, it's not an experience. There are experiences in the Christian life, there are experiences in marriage, there are feelings in marriage, but the bottom line is, it's a relationship. And as my wife often says to me, talk to me. Notice the men smiling there.

I wonder if in heaven that isn't the cry of the heart of God? Please, please, talk to me. I want to know Christ says Paul, I want to know him personally. I am already a Christian, but I want to know him. I want to know him and the power of his resurrection.

Secondly, I want to know him powerfully. What do you think he means when he says, I want to know the power of his resurrection? Well, what happened when Jesus was resurrected? What is the power of his resurrection? Well, in 1 Corinthians 15, which is what we often call the resurrection chapter, because it's the chapter devoted to the significance of the resurrection of Christ, Paul says there in [1 Corinthians 15:26](#) let me read this to you.

"Speaking of the resurrection of Christ, the last enemy to be destroyed is death." That is the last enemy, for he has put everything under his feet. And in this context, he's saying that the last enemy to be destroyed is death. But when God raised Jesus from the dead, he put the last enemy under his feet. Now think about this. If by his resurrection from the dead, God put everything under the feet of Jesus, he put the last enemy under the feet of Jesus.

That means everything else was placed under the feet of Jesus, and therefore to know the power of his resurrection means this. I want to know that power, where everything which threatens to be over my head today, might be under his feet. And the things that threatened to overwhelm me and swamp me, might be things that through the power of his resurrection, discover, although they're big, although they threaten, although they may even swamp me, they don't drown me, they're under his feet.

Let me give you an illustration of that. Remember that time when Jesus came walking on the water? You can read about this in Matthew 14:22-33, Jesus had been with his disciples. That is the day that he actually fed the 5000, and he dismissed the crowds and he said to the disciples, get into the boat and go across to the other side while he remained on the shore. And he knew

something they didn't know, he knew the weather forecast. And as they began to cross the lake, a storm blew up and storms on Galilee, they funnel down from the Golan Heights. The winds come down through a little funnel.

Galilee is below sea level and as you know, it goes down to the Dead Sea, which is way below sea level, and the winds churn up the waves of the Lake of Galilee. When Jesus was asleep on a boat in a storm on one occasion, you may remember it says that the waves came over the boat. Now that's some storm when waves come over the boat. When you catch fish the way you normally catch butterflies, you hold the net up and you hope a wave coming over, you'll catch a few.

Well, they were caught in this storm and it began to blow up and the disciples, it said, became afraid. Remember, most of these disciples were fishermen. They knew how to handle storms. Not only were they fishermen, Galilee was their patch, but they were terrified, it says. Such was the nature of the storm and suddenly in the storm they looked, and to their horror and amazement, they saw what they thought was a ghost walking to them on the water and they scream. The King James says, 'They cried out with a loud voice.' That's a polite way of saying, they screamed, 'ahhhhhh, a ghost!' and suddenly the ghost spoke, it wasn't a ghost at all. It was Jesus walking on the water.

He said, 'Don't be afraid, I am.' Literally he says, 'Don't be afraid. I am.' That's the literal rendering of what he said. And Peter, sitting in the boat, worked something out the other disciples missed. Here's Peter holding onto the boat to stay afloat, fearful that at any moment one

of these waves would come over the boat, might come crashing into the boat and send them down to the depths of the lake. Peter, sitting there in the boat, realized that the very thing which threatened to be over his head was underneath Jesus' feet. When the waves went up, Jesus went up, when the waves went down, Jesus, went down. The very thing which threatened Peter was under the feet of Jesus.

So, Peter initiated this, he said, 'bid me come and join you on the water. Jesus said, come! Whether Peter was expecting that, I don't know. Peter, come! You've got it. You want to share my victory, step out of the boat. Well putting the first foot out, that was easy. The second foot was still in, but he took the second foot out and he began to walk on the waves. When the waves went up, Peter went up, when the waves came down, Peter came down and when they went back up again, Peter came back up. It came down again, Peter came down, and what a few minutes before threatened to be over his head is now under his feet. Now, of course, Peter blew it. He stepped out of the boat, trusting Christ. That's the only way this would ever happen by his trust in Christ. He looked away from Christ, began to look at the waves, became afraid and began to sink. And what did Jesus say? Peter, you're too big, you'll never walk on water. Stop eating potatoes and buy a pair of flippers and then have another go. Is that what he said, no. He said, 'You of little faith. Peter, you stopped trusting me.' You see, it's a beautiful picture of this principle. When God raised Jesus from the dead, he put everything under his feet.

What threatens to be over your head today? What's threatening to be over your head? I'm not talking about stilling the storm, because the storm may not be still. On one occasion, Jesus did still a storm. On another occasion, he said, step out of the boat. If you know Christ, we begin to

know the power of his resurrection. The thing which threatens to be over my head, we can be assured of this, that it's already under the feet of Jesus and my security and my strength comes from the resurrection life of Jesus.

It is him that I trust. It is him that I look to. I want to know the power of his resurrection, not to get out of the problems. That in the problem, you can experience his strength and victory, which leads on to the next part. I want to know him and the power of his resurrection. Listen to this. This is a little bit of a surprise, probably. The power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.

The third thing I want to know, says Paul. I want to know him purposefully. I want to know him personally, I want to know him powerfully, but I want to know him purposefully. For what? That I might share the fellowship or know the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings. What in the world does that mean?

You see, the popular notion is, we want to reverse this. We want Jesus to share our sufferings and in wonderful ways he does. But that is not what he's talking about here. We want to share his sufferings. Now this, of course, has nothing to do with making any contribution to his atonement, his sufferings vicariously on our behalf on the cross. We add nothing to that of course, but rather knowing the power of his resurrection life means not now being exempt from suffering. I am now equipped for suffering. You see, suffering is a big part of life. If we're not suffering at the moment, enjoy it while it lasts, but it's part of life. Paul said earlier in this same letter in [Philippians 1:27](#) it's been granted to you not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

Being granted to you, that doesn't mean, of course, that God is indifferent to our suffering. He is never indifferent to our suffering, it means he equips us for our suffering by the fact that his risen life, which indwells us, is a life which is placed under his feet, while threatened to be over our head. So, now we can go into suffering with a confidence in him to work out his purposes.

That's why in Romans 5:3 Paul says another surprising thing about suffering. He says, we rejoice in our sufferings because you know that suffering produces, and he lists the things that it produces. We often hear people talk about how to enjoy your sufferings, how to cope with your sufferings, how to overcome your sufferings. How often do we hear people talk about how to rejoice in your sufferings? But that's what Paul talks about in Romans 5. Because in them, suffering produces all kinds of qualities that otherwise may be, we would never experience.

I have a friend who I admire enormously who has Legionnaires' disease, where all the muscles of his body are becoming increasingly incapacitated, until eventually he's unable to swallow, eventually unable to breathe. And he's going through a process where all the time his body is becoming less and less able. And I email him once in a while and we talk to each other, and I phone him once in a while. And he sent me a letter one day and he said this, I have not found Christ to be my healer, but I have found Christ to be my sustainer.

There are wonderful times when Christ is our healer and we rejoice in those occasions. But what we may know in every occasion is that he is our sustainer. And this friend of mine, I went to see him some months ago, earlier in the year. He lives in the United States and I happen to be in a

place where I could take a day and go and visit him. I've known him for some years, although he is unable to do very much, there is a reality and a joy. The best word I can use is reality and I came away thinking God was there in his home.

Paul says, I want to know Christ. I want to know the power of his resurrection, not that I've got a fast track out of hardships in life. But that I might then share in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. That means to become like him in his death, the previous chapter has told us in [Philippians 2:5-8](#) where he says, you actually be the same as that of Christ. And it says of him, he humbled himself and became obedient to death. Being like him and like him in his death is being humble and obedient.

And we talked about that a couple of weeks ago. The attitude of the Lord Jesus to his death in the garden of Gethsemane. Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will. If I had to write the script of my life, father, I would exclude this, and I'm sure there are many things in your life you would exclude if you wrote the script for your life. Nevertheless, not my will, let yours be done. And Paul says, I want to be like him in his death. I want that spirit of humility and that spirit of submission. It enables me to go through the most gruelling and horrendous of circumstances. Christ, as my sustainer.

And then the fourth thing he says, 'becoming like him in his death, and so somehow to attain the resurrection from the dead.' I want to know him permanently is his fourth thing, and so somehow to attain to the resurrection from the dead. When you first read that it sounds a bit uncertain, doesn't it? Somehow attain to the resurrection as though there was some ambiguity about this and

some uncertainty about this? But when Paul wrote, this was not an expression of doubt. We know that because in chapter one of the same letter, he says, I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. (Philippians 1:23)

There's no ambiguity about that. He was certain of that. It's not an expression of doubt, I suggest to you it's an expression of humility. I don't deserve this. He's already catalogued earlier in the same chapter all the things that constituted his self-righteousness, all of which I count as loss, as rubbish, he says in the early verses. I don't deserve any of this, but the marvelous thing is I know him. I know the power of his resurrection and I share in his sufferings. Believe it or not, I'm going to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

This is the certainty of every Christian. You see, in this life, we don't know Christ fully. There are limits on our knowledge of Christ. Paul acknowledged that in [1 Corinthians 13:12](#) when he said that, now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. I'm fully known now by God, that's true. I don't fully know God. Now I look through a glass darkly, was that context to that passage. I only know in part that the day is going to come when I'm going to know him more fully. And this is why the Christian life is never static, it's why the Christian life never stops still.

You never arrive at a point, no matter how long you've been a Christian. You might have been a Christian for 50, 60 years and never arrived at a point and said, that's it. Because Paul goes on to say in [Philippians 3:12-14](#), "not that I've already obtained all this or have already been made perfect. Of course I haven't. But I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold



of me. Brothers, I don't consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind, I strain forward to what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

I love those verses. When he says I forget what's behind. What is behind? Well, he's catalogued earlier his past, his history, his sin, his failure. You see, the marvelous thing is, when you come to Christ in true repentance, when we confess our sin, he remembers our sin no more. He puts it behind his back. He throws it into the depths of the sea. But the problem is that we remember it and it holds us back. It's like a ball and chain, because I know what I am like, I know what my weaknesses are, I know what my sins are, I know what kind of things I was up to last week when nobody was watching.

Paul says the marvellous thing is, I can forget that, because I brought it to the cross. One of the devil's most effective ministries, is he's the accuser of the brethren; we're told that in the Book of Revelation. One of his most effective ministries, if I can call it that in your life and mine, is to accuse us and condemn us and hold us back. And Paul says, I know what my past is like. He described himself elsewhere as the chief of sinners. But I forget all of that because Christ has forgotten, he remembers it no more, he cleanses me. And so, the pursuit of my life is that I press on to know him better. And as he says in [Philippians 3:15](#), "all of us who are mature should take such a view of things," because this is spiritual maturity.

Spiritual maturity is not knowing how much you know. Spiritual maturity is knowing how much you don't yet know, and you press on towards it. Spiritual maturity, says Paul, is putting behind

the things that otherwise would hold me back, putting behind the things that would disqualify me and pressing on. The only thing that's important is, I know Christ, I know him personally, I know him powerfully, the power of his resurrection. I know him purposefully, but now I'm equipped to take everything that life throws at me in his strength and power, and to know him permanently, because I'll attain the resurrection from the dead. And then, I will know him fully. In as much as the human mind, whether in time or eternity could possibly contain what there is to know about Christ. I will know him, says Paul, that day.

23 years ago, I began to know my wife. We've been married 21 years because I had to get these boyfriends out of the way. Plural, there's another one after that one, before she saw the light. I tried to switch it on for her, but it just didn't work. She saw it one day eventually, and of course I know her better than anybody else in this room, probably better than anybody else in the world. I hope so. But I know how much I don't know, because she keeps surprising me, so it is with Christ.

Now I want to challenge you this morning, if you don't know him at all, you just know him intellectually, you're here this morning because it's Sunday morning and that's what you do on a Sunday morning, but you will just as easily forget him for the next seven days until next week.

You know him only intellectually, or maybe intermittently in some way. You need to know him intimately, and maybe it needs to begin by coming in repentance and saying, Lord Jesus, I have allowed big barriers to build up between us. You are somewhere over the hill because of these barriers. I want to get rid of them. You come in confession; he'll cleanse you. You can forget

what lies behind, then begin to build that relationship. Make it your business to spend time talking to him and listening to him.

This book is supremely the revelation of Christ. There are many ways God speaks to us. We live in a day when there's not much quietness, not much solitude. You have to make your own solitude, but we need it, to be quiet, to be alone, to hear him speak. But as you do, your love for him will deepen and your knowledge of him will grow and your excitement about him will extend and that's the Christian life. Knowing him.