

Joy When Life is Tough - Philippians
Part 5
“The Nature Of Spiritual Reality”
Philippians 3:1-11
Pastor Charles Price

Good morning. I heard a story some time ago now of a man who was out of work, and he was trying very hard to find a job and every week he would go to the employment office in the town where he lived. Every week they'd look up their list of available positions, but nothing seemed to suit him at all. And this went on week after week, month after month, until one day he came into the employment office. As he walked through the door, they said, Hey, we've been waiting for you, come over here and sit down.

When he sat down, they said, down at the local zoo the monkey has died, and they can't find a replacement. So, they want somebody who will put on a monkey suit and just stand behind the bars and just act like a monkey until they can get the real thing. And as soon as we heard about the job, we thought of you. You've got the right kind of physique for it.

Well, it sounded easy, so he took it on, and sure enough, it was easy. All he had to do is stand behind the bars in his monkey suit and as soon as people come along, scratch himself, beat his chest, eat a few bananas, flick a few peanuts and catch them in his open mouth and the people walking by thought he was the real thing. But he got bored with that, and after a while, he became fascinated by a bar suspended from the centre of the cage which the real monkey used to swing on. So, he learned to leap onto this bar, swing backwards and forwards, and he learned to

hold on with one hand, swing back with the other hand and then let go and capture the bar with his hand, then swing back the other way.

Then he got really smart, and he learned to swing, holding on both hands and then let go, do a somersault, catch the bar with his knees, swing back upside down, let go, somersault and catch the bar with his hands again. This happens again, and one day he was doing this, swinging backwards and forwards, when on the upward swing he let go, did a somersault to catch the bar with his knees, but he missed the bar and was propelled right out of the cage and landed about three cages away in the cage of the lion.

When he landed, the lion let out an almighty roar and this poor little man was absolutely petrified, and he huddled into the corner, he couldn't climb out of the cage, and the lion got up and slowly began to walk towards him. And he was just about to let out an almighty scream for help when he heard the Lion say, "Shut up, or we'll both get fired"

Now, I tell you that story for two reasons. One, because I thought it was funny, but secondly, because there are lots of people who have discovered that their Christian experience has become a little bit like that. They find themselves going through the routine, dressing up in their Christian suits, scratching their Christian itches, beating their Christian chests, eating their Christian bananas and doing their Christian somersaults. But all the time, wondering if the folks in the next pew are playing the same game?

Because they know that what they believe on Sundays somehow doesn't translate into life on Mondays. Not because they don't want it to, not because they're frauds, they are genuine, but it doesn't work. And I want to talk about this this morning, because this is what Paul writes about in this section of Philippians that we're going to look at in Philippians 3. And I'm going to call this the nature of spiritual realities, spiritual realism, because it's so easy to get caught up in all the right outward activities, and yet know that there is very little inward sense of reality about what we're doing.

And Paul is going to share in these verses some of his own experience where he kept all the rules. He went through all the routines and rituals that were required of him, and yet at the end of it all, he describes it in his own language as rubbish. Garbage!

Even though the way he was living would have impressed the neighbours. Because as far as they can see, everything looked fine for Paul, but he said it wasn't, I got the whole thing wrong; and I want to talk about this because, it is easy for us to fall into the same situation.

You see, religious form has often been the enemy of spiritual reality. Because we can keep the form, we can obey the rules, we can jump through all the hoops that seem to have been set up for us, yet have hearts that are barren and bankrupt. And it may well be some of you right now are saying to yourself, I know exactly what you're talking about. Well, I'm glad you're here, because this is what Paul is going to address in this passage, and it's a very positive message because it begins in [Philippians 3:1](#), "Finally, my brothers rejoice in the Lord." I'm going to say something

Paul is implying here, and we'll see it in a moment, that is going to strip away some of the things on which you might have found your security, or you may have placed your dependency.

But I am going to replace it with something so much, so much better. If you see a dog eating a bone and you come along and try and take the bone away from the dog, he will fight you. If you see a dog eating a bone and you come and place a piece of steak on the ground. What is the dog going to do? He'll leave the bone and pick up the steak. Now, says Paul, I'm going to give you steak for the purpose of getting rid of these bones of religious form, which so often we engage in, but which we know in our hearts leave us with a sense of emptiness and barrenness. And the key to this passage is in [Philippians 3:8-9](#) where Paul says, "I might gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law. That is not a righteousness based on what I do or I have done, but which comes through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." The word righteousness, by the way, doesn't mean some pious sort of self-smug righteousness.

The word righteous simply means rightness, it means to be right and then to behave right. You wouldn't be here this morning if you didn't want to be right and behave right. We're here because we're seeking for this kind of spiritual reality in our lives. Yet so often we find that it seems elusive and we end up with the kind of things that Paul says, to be utterly honest, they are rubbish. Deep in our heart sometimes we sense that about the quality of our relationship with God.

Now what I want to do is talk about two things from these verses. First of all, I want to talk about religiosity, replacing spiritual reality, religiosity replacing reality. And then secondly, we're talking about reality replacing religiosity. We need to understand what the problem is first.

This religiosity, as I'm calling it that Paul describes in the first six verses. Now, he says in [Philippians 3:2](#), "watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh."

You say, who in the world is he talking about, these dogs, these mutilators of the flesh?

Sounds like some barbaric butcher, doesn't it? What's he talking about? Well, he goes on to say, these folks put confidence in the flesh, and he goes on to talk about circumcision, something which Paul himself had gone through. What he's talking about are those people who were insisting, and this was a big problem in the early church; that in order to be a Christian, you have to be circumcised. And that was just the thin end of a big wedge, the big wedge was all the legal requirements of the old covenant, but it began with this issue of circumcision.

Now, circumcision was something which God had ordained for Abraham and his descendants. The physical act of circumcision, where the male foreskin was cut away, took place in every Jewish baby at the age of eight days old and God had ordained that back in Genesis 17 as a sign of the covenant that he had made with Abraham. He said, "This is my covenant with you," in [Genesis 17:10](#). This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you. The covenant you are to keep. Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision.

It'll be a sign of the covenant between me and you and for generations to come. Every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised. And God said to Abraham, this is going to be the mark of the covenant and it extended right to Jesus as a baby of eight days old. He went through that process and every Jewish child did. But as the book of Romans tells us, when Paul talks about this there and talks about Abraham there, he says Abraham received the sign of circumcision. (Romans 4:11) It was simply a sign of something.

Now, of course, signs and symbols are important, but more important than the symbol is the substance to which it points. A sign, by definition, is pointing to something else. Now, the symbol was the act of circumcision, but the substance to which it was a sign was that we are a people set apart to God to fulfill his purpose in the world in dependency on his resources. That's what the sign was. So, any Jew by the sign of circumcision, was telling you that I belong to God, I'm one of his people, and his agenda is going to have the priority in my life. That's what it meant.

However, the sign, the symbol, was not nearly as important as the substance to which it pointed, it was simply an indicator of this. And that's why you find a recurring theme of the prophets in the Old Testament is you've got the sign, right, but you know nothing of the substance to which the sign is designed to point. And so, you find the prophets talking about circumcising their ears, the people circumcising their lips, circumcising their hearts. In other words, they're saying, cut around your ears that you might hear God's message, cut around your lips, that you might speak God's message, cut around your hearts so you might obey God's message. Because, although you have the sign, the symbol, you've lost the substance to which it points. Now the tragedy is this,

when we lose the substance to which the symbol points, we retain the symbol, but the symbol then replaces the substance.

So, the important thing becomes not am I God's people and what are the implications of being God's people, the important thing becomes have you had your little boy done? Have you been to the symbol, the sign? And when the symbol replaces the substance, the symbol itself becomes dead.

Now, if we had time, which we haven't, we could look through passages in the book of Jeremiah, for instance, when Jeremiah preaches in Judah and there was something of a revival that took place when Jeremiah began his ministry. Under the king Josiah the temple was packed with people, and Jeremiah stood outside the temple and as the people came out, he preached to them and said, God is totally unimpressed by this, because you've got the symbols, but you haven't got the substance.

It was simply the following of the popular king who brought about this mass return to the temple, but it wasn't real, there was no reality. In the book of Amos, God says to Amos, (Amos 5:21-24) I hate your songs, I hate your worship, I hate your burnt offerings, I hate your sacrifices. And you say, but surely God, every one of these is what you told us back in the Book of Deuteronomy in the Book of Exodus. Well, he did, but the purpose of the symbol was to express the reality of the substance. But you lose the substance, and you engage in the symbols, the symbols replace the substance.

We're going to partake this morning in the Lord's Supper, the communion service. And there are symbols, bread and wine. And when we take the bread, it's not bread actually. I don't know if we can't afford bread, but we have crackers here. And you can be sure it won't be wine, but who cares, because these are just symbols.

I was in India on one occasion and in a communion service and all we had was a banana to pass around. They took this banana, peeled it and we all passed it around and we all broke a bit off this banana, and it got increasingly squelchy as it went around the room. It wasn't the most hygienic way of doing things. But who cares if it was a banana or a loaf of bread, or a cracker. The symbol is important only in as much as it expresses the substance. What is the substance? Jesus said, 'this is my body, this bread represents my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' (Luke 22:19) This is the symbol, but the substance is me.

Take this cup, it's the new covenant, the blood of the New Covenant. Drink this in remembrance of me. It's simply wine in a glass. But the reality, the substance which it points, is me as your substitute, giving myself in order to reconcile you to a holy God. And I want you to never forget this, so even though it may seem tedious once in a while, regularly take this bread, take this wine to bring you back to first base all the time. That's the reason for it. But, you know, some of you can get very superstitious about the bread and the wine. You can start to think there's some virtue in it.

When I studied in Glasgow, I used to go to a church. It was a good church, a Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and they celebrated communion four times a year. And on the Communion Sunday,

the place would be packed, they'd put on an extra service in the afternoon to accommodate the crowds who came out on communion Sunday. And if you were naive and turned up on that Sunday, you'd say to yourself, they're having revival in this place, but you'd be wrong. It was just superstitious Christians coming to get it, thinking something in it was valid, rather than deriving our sustenance from him, of which this is only a symbol.

But the problem under the old covenant, with the old covenant that Paul is referring back to, is that we can engage in all the right symbols but discover at the end of it, that having kept every law and jumped through every hoop, we are bankrupt, devoid of any sense of reality with God.

Let me read you what Paul says about himself. He lists seven things in his own life that he says, if I was to boast, let me tell you the things I can boast about, because these things would impress the neighbours as far as my religiosity and my religious discipline is concerned. He says that in the middle of [Philippians 3:4](#), "if anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, that is in themselves to be self-sufficient, I have more.

Here are the seven reasons. One, I was circumcised on the eighth day. I'm not a proselyte to Judaism. I was born a Jew, and at the eighth day I received the mark of circumcision. I'm of the people of Israel, in other words, my parents were not proselytes either, they were already born Israelites. Not only that, thirdly, I am of the tribe of Benjamin. Benjamin was the only son of Jacob to be born in the land of promise, and therefore the tribe of Benjamin was a particularly prestigious tribe, the very first king of Israel Saul was a Benjamite and Paul says, I'm not just any old rabble of a Jew, you know, I'm a Benjamite! I've got my credentials, I'm a Hebrew of the

Hebrews, meaning, although he had lived in Tarsus, in Cilicia, all his culture and his customs were Hebrew.

He was educated under the most famous Jewish teacher of the day, a man called Gamaliel. He is proficient in the Hebrew language, proficient in the Hebrew scriptures, and he says, 'I'm a Hebrew of the Hebrews.' (Philippians 3:5) In other words, I'm a true blue Jew. My credentials are pretty intact, but I'll tell you something else, he said. If I'm an Israelite by birth, I didn't choose that. If I'm Hebrew by upbringing, I didn't choose that. I'll tell you what I did choose.

The fifth thing he says in regard to law, I'm a Pharisee. I chose to be a Pharisee, and Pharisees were the strict fundamentalists of their day. They were renowned for their discipline, for their zeal, for the keeping of the laws. The word Pharisee means separatist. They were separated from the rabble. They were different. They were very careful about the food they ate, careful about the clothes they wore, careful about the company they kept. And they were so committed to this, that it wasn't enough to make sure you didn't break the laws. They built fences around the laws to make sure you couldn't get anywhere near the real law. For instance, it says six days shall you labour, on the seventh day do no work. They said, that isn't good enough. What is work? They ended up defining work in about 600 different ways.

Carrying a burden was work. Well, what's a burden? They define carrying a burden as anything which weighed more than two dried figs, a couple of prunes, if you like. That's a burden. They define work as reaping. You're not allowed to reap on the sabbath, they said.

What is reaping? Let's define reaping. And they made a whole string of laws to make sure you didn't reap, to make sure you didn't work on the Sabbath and it included that a woman was not allowed to look in the mirror on the Sabbath Day, because if she did, she might see a hair sticking out of her chin. And if she did that, she might be tempted to pluck the hair out of her chin, and that would be harvesting, reaping. So, you weren't allowed to do that. I mean, just to the back teeth, full of rules, this was the Pharisees. Now, says Paul, I was a Pharisee. I mean the neighbours would have said to my parents, you must be proud of your boy Saul, wow, what a disciplined man he's become.

And the sixth thing is, as for zeal I was persecuting the church. You see, I was totally logical about what I believed. If Judaism is right, everything else that threatens it is wrong. There's a new movement on the scene called Christians, followers of Jesus of Nazareth. And if they are threatening Judaism, I will do all I can to stop this new movement, and out of zeal for the law, he says. I persecuted the church not because I was anti-Christian, but because I was pro Judaism and this was threatening it.

And as for legalistic righteousness, he says, seventhly, I was faultless. That's a fantastic claim. As for keeping the law, faultless. You could check me out any day of the week and I kept the law. I was the role model for kids who grew up in my neighbourhood, their parents would say, you live like Saul of Tarsus because, that's a good man.

Now, he says these are reasons I can put confidence in the flesh. These are reasons why the neighbours were impressed by me. These are all the reasons why I could pat myself on the back.

But then he says in [Philippians 3:7-8](#), "whatever was to my profit, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord for whose sake I've lost all things. I consider them rubbish." Notice the word he repeats there, loss, loss. This is loss, this is of no value to me. In fact, he says, it is rubbish. And by the way, the NIV is being rather polite when it uses that word. The real word is strong, but I won't use it this morning because you won't like it. But he says, all of this that I am caught up in, that I've been caught up in, in my heart I know it is rubbish.

And you know, sometimes, one of the greatest days in your Christian life is when you discover that the way you've been living, your Christian life is garbage. I didn't discover that until several years after I became a Christian trying to do my best for God, wondering why it didn't work. I'll talk about that in a moment, because if that's religiosity replacing reality, that's the bone I want the dog to drop. Here's the steak. Reality replacing religiosity. What is the nature of spiritual reality? Well, let me read [Philippians 3:8-9](#), where having said, he considers everything as rubbish, that I may be found in Christ not having a righteousness of my own.

The previous verses have catalogued all the righteousness of his own. It's nothing to do with that, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. Remember, I said just now that righteousness is the ability to be right initially and to behave right. It's not just something that you..... righteousness of God is not just something you receive one day, it's a daily outworking in our lives as well. And Paul says that this righteousness does not derive from what I do for God, because however much I might impress the neighbours with that, as the Book of Isaiah says, all my righteousness is like filthy rags; another word for

rubbish. That's all I can produce, but rather a righteousness derives from what he does for me and in me.

It's through faith in Christ, and he uses that word again. It comes from God and is by faith. This is not a produced righteousness, this is a received righteousness, which is totally different, and the basis of my experience of it, says Paul, is faith.

Now what is faith? Faith is a word that's very common, of course in our Christian vocabulary, but it's a very misunderstood word. Sometimes folks have the idea that faith is believing something you can't prove, and if you can't prove it you need faith, which sounds to me more like gullibility than faith. In other words, if you're a bit naive, then you'll be just ideal for becoming a Christian. If you can have the wool pulled over your eyes, you are a candidate for becoming a Christian. That's nonsense of course. Faith isn't believing what you can't prove.

Other folks have the idea that faith is some kind of mind over matter phenomena, where if you really, really believe something strongly enough, your believing it will have the effect of making it become true. Which, again, of course, is nonsense. What you believe never changes what is true. That's why the most important thing is not what you believe. The most important thing to find out is what is true, and you believe what is true, because if you believe what isn't true, it won't become true just because you believe it. And if you don't believe what is true, it won't cease to be true because you don't believe it. Does that make sense? And you can believe nonsense with utter conviction, it will still be nonsense. You can disbelieve truth because you don't like it. It'll still be true.

That's why faith isn't kind of saying, 'Now let's all agree that we want to change something, so let's just believe it's going to change.' Let's, let's, let's, I think John Roberts should be six inches taller. Do you think that's a good idea? Let's just, come on, close your eyes, let's just believe for six more inches. What nonsense. He doesn't need six more inches, and he won't get it that way anyway. I'm sorry, you'll just have to buy high heels or something John. Sorry to use you as an illustration there John, but you were looking bored, so I needed to bring you into the picture.

Let me tell you what faith is. Faith is a disposition of trust in an object that allows that object to act on my behalf. Let me explain that. Faith is a disposition of trust in an object that allows that object to act on my behalf. Let me give an illustration. I just thought of this. I hope it will work. I have a chair here.

If I put faith in that chair, what that means is, I'm going to adopt an attitude of trust in that chair, which allows that chair to do something for me. You watching? I sit. Now I'm sitting as an act of faith in the chair. It isn't my faith that's holding me here. It's the chair in which I place my faith. I sit as an act of faith, but faith is an attitude towards an object that lets the object do something. For me, it's the chair doing something. I'm not doing anything for the chair, the chair is doing something for me. Now, of course, if I take away the chair and then I try to sit on my faith, what's going to happen? I discover my faith is totally meaningless, unless it's placed in an object for the purpose of allowing the object to do something for me.

Listen, faith has nothing to do with what you do for the object. It has everything to do with what you let the object do for you. You put faith in the car and let the car take you down the road.

You don't do anything for the car. You can go to sleep on the backseat, it'll take you down the road, it's what the car does for you. You put faith in an aircraft, you can fly through the air. You don't do anything for the aircraft, you let the aircraft do something for you.

You put faith in Jesus Christ, you discover it has nothing to do with what you do for Jesus Christ. It's letting Jesus Christ do something for you, and Paul says, in all these years of my trying to do my best for God, I thought it all depended on what I do for God and I was so utterly committed to this, that as far as legalistic righteousness was concerned, I was faultless. I was so utterly committed I became a Pharisee, I became the top dog when it comes to legalism, but it's garbage, says Paul, because it's not what I do for God at all.

If it's what you did for God, some of us have a big advantage over others, because some of us are a bit more disciplined than others. Some of us are a little more self-confident than others. But the marvellous thing is, we are on totally level ground. In fact, the weaker you know yourself to be, the less confident you are in yourself, the more likely you are going to be, as Paul says, to put no confidence in the flesh in myself, and instead, put my confidence exclusively in God and say, God, this is not what I do for you, this is what you do for me.

This isn't just about becoming a Christian. Though it is true of becoming a Christian, absolutely true of becoming a Christian. You come with empty hands and say, 'Lord, please, would you

save me, cleanse me, forgive me, send your Holy Spirit to live within me. Give me the gift of eternal life.' But it's about how to live the Christian life as well.

Paul wrote about this to the Galatians. In Galatians 3:2, he said to them, I want to ask you a question, did you receive the spirit by observing the law, that is, by keeping the rules or by believing, that is by faith? Do you receive the spirit by keeping the rules? Or do you receive the spirit by faith? Well, the answer is by faith. They knew that Paul had just told them that about four verses earlier, anyway.

But then he says, are you so foolish then, for after beginning with the spirit, you are now trying to attain your goal by human effort. Do you receive the spirit by work or by faith? It's by faith, that's how you become a Christian, says Paul. You know that, you Christians in Galatia, but you fools. Paul uses pretty strong language, doesn't he from time to time? You fools, having received the spirit by faith, you're now living by human effort. So, the only explanation for the kind of Christian life you live is simply you, your strength, your gifts, your abilities, your discipline. Well, that makes you religious. But the marvellous thing is, that the only legitimate explanation for the Christian life is that this is what God is doing in any man, any woman, any boy, any girl.

I became a Christian on a Saturday night when I was twelve years of age after seeing a Billy Graham film in the town hall in Hereford, in the west of England. And that night, I knew I wasn't a Christian, I said, 'Lord, please take over my life.' I didn't know if anything happened at all, but the next day I went to the church that I'd been to all my life in the village I lived in. And that Sunday morning, for the first time, the service was interesting.

I went back on Sunday night, again for the first time in a long while, what the preacher said made sense, and I thought to myself, this is incredible, these people have changed overnight. But I realized actually what had changed was that something had happened to me. Before it was dull and boring, now it was interesting and alive and God put into my heart what he puts into all of our hearts, a hunger and thirst for righteousness. I had a bad track record in righteousness, so I tried to change the way I lived, and I found I couldn't.

We used to have youth meetings. Christians in that area would come together and the preachers used to preach the same kind of message every week. They'd stand up and say things like this, 'there's some of you here tonight, and although you're Christian, there's not much to show for it.' And I'd think, 'Oh, that's me.' No one ever taps you on the shoulder and says, 'why are you different?' But no one had ever done that to me, because you're not different. The preacher would say, 'That's probably why, yeah, you still commit the same old sins.' That's right! 'And some new ones.' Yeah, that's also true of me! 'And you're a mess.' And the preacher would describe me, and I'd say, 'yes, I'm a mess!' 'Tonight, do you want to be different?' And I longed to be different.

Tonight, I'm going to ask you to dedicate yourself to Christ. So, I dedicate myself to Christ. I'd say, God, I'm sorry I failed you, but I promise you tonight, I'm going to live for you from now on. And I would last about 24 hours and I'd go back to where I was before, and I go to the next meeting and the preacher would say, there are some of you here tonight and although you have

been a Christian for a while, there's not much to show for it. Oh, that's me again! Tonight, I'm going to ask you to be different, and I'd long to be different.

And now I am going to ask you to rededicate yourself to Christ. So, I rededicated myself to Christ. God, I'm sorry it didn't work last time, but this time I really mean it. And if it was a good meeting on a Saturday night, it would last 36 hours till Monday morning, then I go right back to where I was before. I go to the next meeting and I got dedicated and rededicated and re-rededicated and I rededicated my rededicated dedication. One night I got consecrated because it sounded deeper. I wasn't sure what it was, but I tried it.

Nothing changed until several years after having been a Christian and trying with the sense of frustration, I made a discovery that changed my life; that the Bible never tells me to dedicate myself to God, it tells me to die to myself. Because the only one who can live the Christian life is Christ himself. And he's not up there somewhere, an example to be copied, but by his Holy Spirit, he's down here in me, making my body his home. I didn't receive anything that day I hadn't received the day I became a Christian, because the day I became a Christian, God gave me himself. That's all you need.

I began to realize that's not what I do for God, it's what I let God do for me. We talked about this of course, because Philippians is full of it. In [Philippians 1:6](#) Paul says, that he who began the good work in you will bring it to completion. I'm confident, he who began. Listen, it's not that you will complete what God began. No, no, no, no, says Paul. That's not the question, that will end up making you as religious as the Judaisers. But that He who began the good work in you,

that's Christ will continue it. In Philippians 2, he says God works in you to will and do his good purpose. We looked at that. Here in Philippians 3, he's saying righteousness is not based on what you do for God. It comes by faith on the basis of what he does for you. Faith is an attitude towards an object that lets that object work on my behalf. And that's why, spiritual reality derives from the measure to which God becomes the explanation for my life. Because I'm living in dependency on him and obedience to him. You see, if our Christianity can be explained in terms of our abilities, our gifts, our personalities, our disciplines, our interests. It requires nothing supernatural.

When the explanation becomes God is at work in that life, your life, my life. Then it's the real thing. That's why Jesus said, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and do what? Do you remember how that verse finishes? See your good works and pat you on the back? No! See your good works and make a video about your good works as an example to other people? No!

See your good works and praise your father in heaven. Why? What's got to do with him? It has everything to do with him, because when they see your good works and Jesus says, there's no one good but God alone. What is good, derives from God when they see your good works they recognize the origin is not you, but him. They look at people like you and me and say, Wow, that is Charles Price, that can't possibly be him, because I've known him for years and this isn't the way he behaves. This is God.

And that makes the Christian life accessible to every man, every woman, every boy, every girl, no matter what your background, no matter what your status in life. All it requires is an empty hand. It says I can't, but you can. That's why Paul then says in Philippians 3:10, I want to know Christ. I want to know the power of his resurrection. And we're going to pick that up next week. Because in one sense what I'm saying to you this morning only has its completion really in what Paul says in the next verses we can pick up next week.

What does it mean to know Christ? What does it mean? What does it mean to know the power of his resurrection? What does that mean? What happened when God raised Jesus from the dead? I'll tell you what happened when God raised Jesus from the dead, he put everything under his feet. Therefore, everything which threatens to be over your head today, has been placed under his feet. And to know the power of his resurrection, is to know his victory. And the ability then, as Paul goes on to say, is to share in his sufferings; the ability to live life that is rough and tough and often cruel, but with the resources to live with suffering. So, we'll pick it up next week.

I don't know how God may have spoken to you today, that's his prerogative to speak into your heart. But if you say I'm looking into a mirror and I see in that first part of Philippians 3 the barrenness of my own life. Rubbish, as Paul describes it, even though you may be a Christian. You need to rediscover Christ, not as the one who simply hung on a cross, but the one who's alive today. To live his life in you and as you live by faith in him, he works!