

Living with Holy Dissatisfaction
(Philippians 3:10-11)
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INTRO

I'd like to begin with a question this morning — Are you dissatisfied with anything in your life?

I think most of us are dissatisfied with a number of things.

For example, many people would like to be prettier or more handsome, or weigh less, or be smarter or richer. Many people want a bigger house or a fancier car, or a better job or spouse.

I think it's safe to say that, for the most part, dissatisfaction is selfish and isn't pleasing to God.

Those of us who are Christians know that we should be content with what the Lord has given us or not given us. The Bible has a lot to say about contentment.

For example, we read in Hebrews 13:5, BE CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.

And this well-known statement in Philippians 4:11.

I HAVE LEARNED TO BE CONTENT WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

There are many more verses that deal with contentment, so it's clear that God wants us to be content with what He gives us and allows in our lives.

But there is a type of contentment that the Lord doesn't want us to have.

Or to put it another way, there's a type of **dissatisfaction** that the Lord **wants all of us** to have, a dissatisfaction I will refer to as a "holy dissatisfaction" in contrast to the normal, **selfish** kind of dissatisfaction we tend to have.

We will be looking in detail at Philippians 3:10-11 this morning, but to get an understanding of the context of today's passage, let's first look at verses 8 and 9.

In these verses, we see what Paul considered to be the most important thing in his life.

I CONSIDER EVERYTHING A LOSS COMPARED TO THE SURPASSING GREAT-NESS OF KNOWING CHRIST JESUS MY LORD, FOR WHOSE SAKE I HAVE LOST ALL THINGS. I CONSIDER THEM RUBBISH, THAT I MAY GAIN CHRIST AND BE FOUND IN HIM, NOT HAVING A RIGHTEOUSNESS OF MY OWN THAT COMES FROM THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST — THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES FROM GOD AND IS BY FAITH. (NIV)

In light of these words, it's only natural to assume that Paul wouldn't be dissatisfied with anything in his life as long as he gained Christ. But, as we look at today's text, we will see that this wasn't the case. After saying he considered everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus, Paul wrote these words.

¹⁰ 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, ¹¹ AND SO, SOMEHOW, TO ATTAIN TO THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD. (NIV)

I. THE APOSTLE PAUL HAD A HOLY DISSATISFACTION

In verse 10, after emphasizing with the strongest words possible that knowing Jesus Christ is the most important thing in the world to him,

Paul elaborates on what “knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” actually meant to him and what it involved.

II. WHAT PAUL WANTED TO TRULY KNOW AND EXPERIENCE

A. “I WANT TO KNOW CHRIST”

The first thing Paul mentions in verse 10 is this: “I want to know Christ.”

The Greek word Paul used in Philippians 3 for “know” is the word that means to know something intimately—to know someone or something by personal experience and in your heart.

And as most of you have probably heard before, it is those who **know** Jesus Christ personally as Lord and Savior **by faith** who are Christians. Head knowledge or ceremonies, such as baptism, don’t make a person a Christian or a child of God.

So, when Paul said that knowing Christ was the most important thing, he was referring to being born again and becoming a child of God **by faith** in Jesus Christ.

But Paul wasn’t content to simply come to know Christ, or to know Him in a shallow, “Well,-it-was-nice-meeting-you” kind of way.

After beginning his relationship with Christ, Paul wanted that relationship to become all it could possibly be **and** all that **Jesus** wanted it to be.

He wanted to know Jesus more and more intimately.

Who is the person with whom **you** have the deepest, most intimate relationship?

Who do you know so well that you can sense what they’re thinking and feeling, or what they want you to do?

Whose heart do you know and understand best?

This is what Paul is referring to here, I think.

He wanted to know Jesus so intimately that what **pleased** Jesus pleased him, what **grieved** Jesus grieved him, and what **angered** Jesus angered him.

He wanted the love and compassion that filled Christ’s heart to fill his own heart, and he wanted that love and compassion to touch his heart and move him to do and say what Jesus would do and say.

And how do we come to know Jesus in this way?

By reading His Word and seeing what He was like when He was here, and learning what He desires for all those who call themselves “Christians.”

By seeking to know Him in prayer and through fellowship with others who know Him.

And as we come to know Christ more intimately, our joy will increase, because the joy we experience as Christians is directly proportional to the degree to which our hearts and lives are in tune with His.

I believe we can sum up Paul’s desire here in this way—to the greatest degree possible, Paul wanted to **become like** the **Lord he loved**.

And this is the Lord's will for **everyone** who becomes a child of God.

Paul had a holy dissatisfaction when it came to his relationship with Christ and the degree to which he was like Christ.

What about us?

Are we satisfied with things the way they are, or do we have a holy dissatisfaction as Paul did?—

I was convicted by the Holy Spirit as I prepared this message because I've been too satisfied with my relationship with Jesus.

It's **so easy** for me to be content with where I am and let my ministry **for Jesus** take precedence over my relationship **with Jesus**.

It's **so easy** to lose our holy dissatisfaction in the busyness of our daily lives, and pastors are no different than non-pastors in this regard.

I know that Alistair would appreciate your prayers for him, that the Lord would help him to maintain a holy dissatisfaction in his relationship with Jesus.

Let's look now at some of the areas in which we need to know Jesus better and become more like Him.

B. "AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION"

The first thing Paul says he wants to know better is the power of Christ's resurrection.

He wasn't content to simply become a Christian and live a life that wasn't much different than that of a non-Christian.

No, he wanted to **know** in his heart and **experience** the power that raised Jesus from the dead and what it could do in **his life** and the **lives of others**.

And he wanted all Christians to know and experience the same thing.

In Ephesians 1, Paul told the Ephesian Christians that he was praying for them.

Part of what he prayed for them is this.

¹⁸ I PRAY ALSO THAT THE EYES OF YOUR HEART MAY BE ENLIGHTENED IN ORDER THAT YOU MAY KNOW ... ¹⁹ HIS INCOMPARABLY GREAT POWER FOR [OR, "IN"] US WHO BELIEVE. THAT POWER IS LIKE THE WORKING OF HIS MIGHTY STRENGTH, ²⁰ WHICH HE EXERTED IN CHRIST WHEN HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD. (NIV)

Paul wanted God to open the eyes of their heart and enlighten them to understand and know God's incomparably great power—the power God exerted **in** Christ when He raised Him from the dead.

What Paul desired for those he led to Christ was the same thing he desired for himself—that they would experience the power of Christ's resurrection working in them and through them in their daily lives.

If we're honest, though, I think we would all say that we don't experience this incomparably great power within us as much as we'd like.

In fact, some Christians don't even know this power is available to them, so they struggle to live the Christian life in their own feeble strength.

This is why Paul prayed that God would enlighten the eyes of our heart to know that this power **is available** to us.

And because Paul knew that he, too, needed this power in order to live the life God had called him to live, he wrote in today's text that he wanted to know and experience the power of Christ's resurrection working in his life.

What about you? Have you ever prayed such a prayer?

Have you asked the Lord to enlighten the eyes of your heart so you can know and experience His resurrection power in your own life?

Maybe there are some here who are thinking, "I've been praying for this, but God doesn't answer my prayer."

All I can say is keep praying and ask God for the faith to really believe that the source of this power is already within you. Don't view it as if God is going to pour this power into you from outside you.

If you are a Christian, His power is **already** at work **within** you because **Jesus lives in you**.

By faith, stand on the fact that Jesus lives in you, as Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20.

CHRIST LIVES IN ME; AND THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR ME.

Take time with the Lord before you begin your day, and ask Him to help you take one day at a time.

And ask Him for the strength – the resurrection power – that you need to live **that day** in His strength and for His glory.

C. "AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF SHARING IN HIS SUFFERINGS"

In Philippians 3:10, Paul goes on to say that he wants to know "the fellowship of sharing in" Christ's sufferings.

Some people interpret this verse to mean that Paul wanted to suffer for Christ and the Gospel.

And if you read the book of Acts and Paul's other letters, it's clear that Paul was very willing to suffer for the sake of the Gospel.

But I don't think this is what Paul was referring to here in Philippians 3:10.

Because Paul said he wanted to share in the fellowship of **Christ's** sufferings, he wasn't talking about suffering **for** Christ — he was talking about suffering **with** Christ.

And, if this interpretation is correct, the question we need to consider is “In what ways is Jesus suffering now?”

It would take a whole message to do this topic justice, but, for now, let’s just consider this. How do you think Jesus feels when He sees all that is taking place in the world today?

What is He feeling when He sees Boko Haram use the Christian school girls they kidnapped in Nigeria 2 years ago as unwilling suicide bombers, or forces them to marry Muslim men and live as Muslims?

What is He feeling when ISIS militants sell and trade teen-age girls, and even girls as young as 8 or 10, as sex slaves in Iraq and Syria?

What is He feeling now as He sees His followers imprisoned and beheaded, and beaten or raped, simply because they are Christians?

What does He feel when He sees AIDS orphans struggling to survive, and sees children being abandoned and abused by their parents?

And what does Jesus feel when He sees billions of lost souls living and dying without hope and without salvation?

I could go on and on, but I think you see what I’m getting at.

And the question every Christian needs to consider is this — in light of all the suffering in the world and the pain it caused our Lord, are sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings?

Do we care about the suffering people around us, or are we focused only on **our** needs and **our** problems, and our **pleasure** and **possessions**?

There are hurting, needy people all around us — in our homes, schools, companies, and even in this church.

When Jesus sees what sin has done to His once-perfect world, His heart is filled with sadness, pain, holy anger, and compassion.

It’s what motivated Him to come to this sin-filled world and give His life on the cross.

We will never be able to **fully** comprehend and empathize with His feelings, but we **can empathize** to some extent if we truly desire to **share** in the **fellowship** of **His** sufferings.

Most Christians have no problem praying that they will be able to know Christ and the power of His resurrection, but praying about sharing in the fellowship of His sufferings ...

... that one’s harder to pray, isn’t it!

This prayer, this desire, will **cost us** something, because when we share in Christ’s sufferings, we will also be moved to become His hands and feet, and to make various sacrifices to meet the needs that move His heart.

But believe me, what we receive in return is far greater than the cost!

May God give us the grace, faith, and love we need to live and love as Paul did!

And may He create in us a holy dissatisfaction that motivates us to long to become more like Jesus, and share in His sufferings.

D. “BECOMING LIKE HIM IN HIS DEATH”

Paul moves on in verse 10 to say that he wants to become like Jesus in His death.

Did he mean that he wanted to die on a cross for the sins of the world like Jesus did?

Of course not!

The word translated “become like Him” is a word that means “to be conformed inwardly in one’s experience to someone.”

I think Paul is referring to what he wrote about previously in chapter 2.

Let’s look at that famous passage, chapter 2, verses 5 through 8.

⁵ HAVE THIS ATTITUDE IN YOURSELVES WHICH WAS ALSO IN CHRIST JESUS, ⁶ WHO, ALTHOUGH HE EXISTED IN THE FORM OF GOD, DID NOT REGARD EQUALITY WITH GOD A THING TO BE GRASPED, ⁷ BUT EMPTIED HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A BOND-SERVANT, AND BEING MADE IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN.

⁸ BEING FOUND IN APPEARANCE AS A MAN, HE HUMBLING HIMSELF BY BECOMING OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH, EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS.

Do you see what Paul was saying in chapter 3?

By becoming like Jesus in His death, Paul was saying that he wanted to be a humble servant of others and imitate Jesus’ humility, even if obedience to the Lord meant that he would die for his faith, which he eventually did within 5-10 years of writing Philipians.

For Paul, being conformed to Christ in His death meant dying to self and living a life of selfless servanthood.

I think it’s what Jesus was referring to in Luke 9:23 when He said,

“IF ANYONE WISHES TO COME AFTER ME, HE MUST **DENY HIMSELF**, AND **TAKE UP HIS CROSS DAILY** AND FOLLOW ME.”

Denying ourselves and dying daily to our selfish desires and plans in order to follow Jesus – in other words, in order to obey Jesus and strive with God’s help to become like Him – this is the lifestyle the Lord calls every one of His disciples to.

How are we doing in this regard?

Are we content with the way things are in our life and relationship with Jesus, or do we have, or desire to have, a holy dissatisfaction that moves us to humble ourselves and die daily so that we can become like Christ in His death?

E. “TO ATTAIN TO THE RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD”

Paul ends in verse 11 by summing up, in a sense, **why** he wanted to know Christ,

and **why** he wanted to know the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, and become like Him in His death —
so that he could “attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

This expression “attain to the resurrection from the dead” refers to what Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4.

We don't have time to go into detail today, but, simply put, the Bible teaches that when Christians die, our soul – the real us – goes to be with the Lord.

Paul wrote about this in chapter 1, verse 23 where he wrote that he wanted to die and go to be with Christ.

Paul also wrote this in 1 Corinthians 15:50,52-53:

FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD; NOR DOES THE PERISHABLE INHERIT THE IMPERISHABLE. ... WE WILL BE CHANGED. FOR THIS PERISHABLE MUST PUT ON THE IMPERISHABLE, AND THIS MORTAL MUST PUT ON IMMORTALITY.

So, in Philippians 3:11, Paul isn't referring to eternal life, per se, since we receive eternal life the moment we trust in Christ.

What he is referring to here is the time when the Lord will give new, glorified bodies to those who died trusting in Him, and to those who are living when He returns.

Paul wrote about this 10 verses later, in Philippians 3:20-21.

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN, AND FROM IT 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.

Our eternal home, if we are Christians, is not up in heaven somewhere.

Our eternal home is described in the last book of the Bible, in Revelation chapter 21.

If we die before the time Paul is describing here in verses 20 and 21, we will go to heaven, as the Bible clearly teaches.

But Paul is emphasizing here that the reason he is so passionate about knowing Christ and living for Him, isn't that when he dies, he wants to go to heaven and spend eternity there as a disembodied spirit.

No, he is ultimately looking forward to spending eternity with His loving and gracious Savior in his glorified, resurrection body on the recreated Earth.

In next week's message, Kevin Shepard will be preaching about this theme from verses 20 and 21.

CONCLUSION

The heart of the Gospel is the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ.

But knowing Christ, as we are privileged to do, involves more than just knowing His suffering, death, and resurrection as **historical** events.

Rather, it is knowing the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus as active events and forces in our daily lives.

Knowing Jesus Christ means **becoming like Him** through an intimate, life-changing **relationship with Him** —

a relationship characterized by joy as we experience His resurrection power and joyfully share in His suffering, a relationship that will culminate in a glorious eternity with Christ that is more wonderful than anything we can imagine!

So, as this message comes to a close, I believe the Lord wants each of us to honestly and sincerely consider our answer to this question —

“Do I have a holy dissatisfaction, or am I satisfied with my relationship with Christ?”

Or, if you aren’t yet a Christian, the question you need to consider is this:

“Am I satisfied with my **lack** of a relationship with Christ?”

If you don’t have a holy dissatisfaction, what are you going to do about it?

I pray that everyone of us will live with holy dissatisfaction until we see Jesus face to face!

Before we close in prayer, I’d like us to stand and sing “Lord, I Want to Know You More.”

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Let’s pray.

Lord, forgive us for being satisfied with our relationship with You.

Help us to always have a holy dissatisfaction and to keep seeking to know You more intimately.

Help us to experience Your resurrection power in our daily lives, and to know You in Your sufferings, Your death, and Your resurrection.

Lord, we want to attain to the resurrection one day,

and we pray that You will enable us all to live with a holy dissatisfaction until we see You face to face.

In Jesus name, we pray.

NOW MAY THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING, SO THAT YOU WILL ABOUND IN HOPE BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.