

Knowing Christ (The Excitement of Being a Disciple)

Philippians 3:10 – 4:1

Cornerstone Cong. Church

Oct. 21, 2017, By Rev. Bernie Michaud

For the last month or so we have been looking at what it means to be a disciple.

We discovered that being a disciple means to be a student.

And in our scripture text for today Paul says that He wants to know Christ.

Paul was not satisfied just to know about Jesus,

He wanted to know and to experience everything about Him.

Even to the point of being put to death to expand the gospel.

Paul felt that being able to suffer for the gospels sake helped him to understand Jesus better.

And so, he did this all with joy.

He pressed onward to win the prize

You might say that he was sold out.

Paul goes on to say in verse 17 to join with others in following his example.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul says, "Follow me as I follow Christ.

So, the question is how do we do this.

How do we become disciples of Christ?

How do we follow the example of Paul?

Well, today I want to look at just a few aspects of what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

What it means to truly be a student of Christ.

Let's pray: Father I pray that you would be with us this evening as we look at what it means to be your disciples. I know that unless you had drawn us to you and that unless you had created a hunger in our hearts to follow you that we would continue to go our own way. So, Lord, I pray today that you would increase our love for you, increase our desire to know you and help us to run the good race that we might win the prize that is set before us. Amen.

The first thing that I want you to understand is that being a disciple or a student is not about becoming a better person.

So many Christians spend their whole lives trying to overcome sin.

If you are one of those people, I say, "Stop it."

You may think that working on yourself to become a better person is what it is all about.

How many of you are constantly trying to overcome sin?

Being a disciple is about learning about who God is.

It's all about Him and none about you.

You don't need to stress about overcoming your sin.

Jesus overcame your sin for you.

In fact, that is the first thing that you need to learn as a disciple.

This is the message that Paul preached and this is the message that he saw as so great that he was willing to forsake everything even his life to proclaim to the world.

Paul wasn't excited about the fact that he had overcome sin.

He wasn't at all excited about anything like that.

In fact, he talked about his shortcomings.

Let's read Romans 7:19

- For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing
Paul was excited about the grace that freed him from the consequences of his sin.

Let's read Romans 8:1

- Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
He was excited about the fact that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

I really like what Paul said about Grace.

- Ephesians 2:8-9
For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.

And Paul goes on in

- Romans 11:6 to say:
And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

This is what excited Paul and it's what excites me.

People who live their lives trying to overcome sin live defeated lives.

The purpose for you to become a disciple is so that you will be as excited about the gospel as Paul is.

That you would be so excited that you would be willing to be like Paul in every way.

And that in doing so you would be like Christ.

God doesn't want you to spend your lives thinking about sin; He wants you to think about His Son.

So, now that we know that we are not to become a student of ourselves let's go on to learn how to become a student of Christ.

Paul says to study to show yourself approved.

- Read 2 Timothy 2:15
Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

To teach this point I want to use an illustration.

This is a picture of the phone that I have in my bedroom.

- Picture of Phone
This is what is called a "stupid phone."
I know this because every time this rang when I was a kid my father would say,
"Can someone answer the stupid phone."

Now, some of you have what is called a smart phone.

Please take out your phones and turn them on.

Please take a picture of you here and post it on Facebook.

If anyone wants a selfie with me or Pastor Jonathan please come up and take it.

Please leave your phone on for the rest of the service and stand and answer it if it rings.

We will wait; your calls are important.

Now I need someone who is willing to come up front with their smart phone.

Tell me why this phone is better than mine.

Tell me about the apps that you have.

Tell me how you learned about this phone.

Lastly, tell me how much you paid for this phone.

Thank you!

It's clear to see that phones are important to people and those that have them take the time to learn how to use them.

You learn all the features and you look at it all day long.

You have become students of your phones.

The reason why you do all of this is because there are benefits of knowing all of this.



Paul understood the benefits of knowing Christ.

He understood that it was the power of salvation.

Read Romans 1:16

- For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

When Paul says this he is not talking only about being saved from hell, he is talking about being saved in this life from all of the schemes that Satan has for you.

Paul was living the abundant life and that's what it's all about for you too.

So, how is all of this done?

Well, simply put, students learn to study God's word.

They attend church every week.

Paul studied for years to become equipped. (See Gal. 1:15-18)

Students read their Bibles and read books to help them understand it.

They go to Bible studies such as the ones that this church has running all the time.

Some take Bible courses at home or even go to a Bible college.

The more time that you put in, the more you will benefit.

It's that simple.

A healthy tree doesn't worry about growing fruit or getting rid of its dead leaves. It just stays healthy and all the rest happened naturally.

Students become members of a church and spend time with God's people.

They do this to become part of the work of spreading the gospel.

Each person using their gifts to work as a mighty army.

Finally, thinking about what I said about not spending your lives trying to overcome sin.

When I counsel people who are stuck in sin I usually tell them to take a week and instead of trying to walk away from sin, just try to walk toward God.

Let me explain by using this illustration.



I wish that I could have come up with an illustration that really happened but I had to make this one up. This never really happened but I'm going to tell you anyway to make the point.

When the kids were young we would have an Easter egg hunt.

There was a path behind our house that led into the woods.

We would hide the eggs within reaching distance from the path.

We would tell the kids that all of the eggs were near the path.

If they stayed on the path they would find the eggs that were hid.

If they strayed from the path they wouldn't find any.

That's the way it is with God's laws and His leading.

There is a narrow path that we are told to walk and all of the blessings are found on that path.

God hates to see His children leaving the path because He loves us and truly wants us to be blessed.

When I am tempted to sin, I think of this illustration and I say to myself, "All of God's blessings are found along the path of righteousness.

One Easter when I was young I got this giant chocolate bunny in my basket. I thought, "this will last me all year," but when I lifted it up it was very light; I discovered that it was hollow.

You may see things outside of the path of righteousness that look good but they are hollow.

God has put all good before His children and all of His blessings are found on the paths of righteousness.

- Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Paul had discovered the treasure of knowing Christ.

He found of all the blessings that were on his path.

This same path lies before each of us.