

Our theme for this morning's meditation is that, 'The one thing necessary is God himself.' Paul was writing to the Philippians while he was imprisoned in Rome to thank them for the gift that he had received from them. He was also writing to them concerning the Judaizers and Legalists who were insisting that even after a person receives Christ by faith they had to undergo circumcision and follow the letter of the law in order to be saved. Paul then reminds them that he too was like that in his pre-Christian state. He was confident of his righteousness because he had kept the law and saw it as an attempt to merit God's approval and blessing. He was faultless in terms of legalistic standards of scrupulous external conformity to the letter of the law. This was Paul's background, which in the eyes of the world were worth having. But now Paul sees all of this from a different perspective. In the passage from Philippians 3 Paul talks about three key things that one has to know. The first is: Know Christ - Personally; the second: Know the power of his resurrection - to overcome sin; and finally: Know the Goal to which he has called us to - Forget the past and press on.

Paul begins by saying, 'But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, 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 on the basis of faith.' Paul confronts those whose confidence was in their pedigree. Though he himself could boast about all these things he says that whatever were 'gains' to him he now considers as 'loss.' He uses the business language of 'profit' and 'loss'. Status due to birth, or being proud of strict observance of religious rituals, pride due to education or position can all be seen as 'gains' through the lens of the world and can make us unaware of the need for God and his forgiveness. Paul was in a similar situation and therefore had to relinquish all his 'gains' for the sake of the gospel. He counts everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus. This knowledge that Paul is talking about comes from the encounter he had with him on the Damascus road and is a personal intimate knowledge which he has with the Lord which was life changing and ongoing. We too are called to know Christ personally as our Lord and Saviour.

Secondly, Paul calls us to know the power of the resurrection so that we may be able to overcome sin and temptations in our lives. Paul writing to the Romans says, 'And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.' (Rom 8:11 NIV). We as followers of Jesus, when we know Christ as Lord and Saviour are allowed to experience his power. The Power of the resurrection is power of the Holy Spirit. When all the powers of Satan, the principalities and powers tried to keep Jesus down in the grave, they were defeated by the power of the resurrection. Death could not contain him and so Satan and death are defeated foes. Whenever we face temptations and trials we are able to overcome them because of this power of the resurrection. In our weakness God's strength is made perfect. Therefore as God's children, we too are challenged to experience in our life - the power of Holy Spirit. We have the assurance that we can overcome sin and temptation because of the indwelling presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, Paul calls us know the goal to which he has called us to. We are called to forget the past and press on. He himself was to forget those wrongs done, e.g., the persecution of the church (Phil 3:6), and so on, whose memory could paralyze one with guilt and despair; to forget, too, those attainments achieved, the recollection of which might cause one to put life into neutral and to say "I have arrived"; and to forget in such a way that the past, good or bad, will have no negative bearing on one's present spiritual growth or conduct. Paul also wishes to express the importance of continuous concentration on the things that are in front, i.e., on the goal of the full and complete knowledge of Christ Jesus. Our striving is to know Christ and become more and more like him. May God help us to know Christ personally and become like him.