
KNOWING CHRIST

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16

WHISKEY, JOSHUA

Introduction

A General Knowledge of The Leadership of Goodluck Jonathan

Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan served as the 14th President of Nigeria, a significant position in the country's political history. His presidency, which spanned from 2010 to 2015, marked a period of both challenges and achievements for Nigeria.

Ascending to the presidency following the death of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, Jonathan became the first Nigerian leader from the South-South geopolitical zone. His tenure is notable for several key developments, including his focus on economic reforms, improvements in education, and infrastructure projects aimed at modernizing the nation.

However, one of the most defining moments of his presidency was his decision to peacefully concede defeat in the 2015 general elections to Muhammadu Buhari. This act was a milestone in Nigerian democracy,

demonstrating a commitment to the peaceful transfer of power and earning Jonathan widespread respect both within Nigeria and internationally.

As the 14th President, Jonathan's leadership has left a lasting impact on Nigeria, particularly through his advocacy for democratic principles and his emphasis on the importance of maintaining peace and stability in Nigeria today.

Transition: From Factual Knowledge to Spiritual Knowledge

So why do I start our time in God's Word this way, talking about a relationship with a friend? It is simply this; as we go through life there are many who say they know Jesus Christ yet it's questionable when you look at the way they live that it's questionable whether they have ever entered into a relationship with Him at all. When we come to know Jesus Christ personally, when we enter into a relationship with Him individually, everything in our life begins to change. This is exactly what

Paul wants to show us as we spend time in this passage from Philippians 3.

The Context of Paul's Letter to the Philippians

I'd like to give some context here to what Paul is going to be telling us through this passage so I'd like to back up here. What church is Paul addressing as he writes this letter to Philippi? You can see how this church is birthed in Acts 16 and here Paul is on a missionary journey as he is traveling with Silas, Luke and even Timothy has joined him. On this journey they are going back to some of the churches that God used Paul to found even as he and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey. Paul's goal is that he wants to see how the churches are doing and he wants to strengthen the churches by being with them once again. While he is in route, he has a desire to go into Bithynia but the Holy Spirit hinders him from going there and instead through a vision given to him at night Paul receives a vision of a man in Macedonia saying 'come over here and help us.' Immediately they set out the next day, as soon as they could, for Macedonia confident that God had called them to preach in an effective ministry in new territory. One of the things Paul loved to do was to take the Gospel where it had never gone before so this was fitting for his desire as a missionary. Yet when they arrived in

Philippi, the key city of Macedonia, to Paul's surprise there is no synagogue.

The Birth of the Philippian Church (Acts 16)

For there to be a synagogue there had to be at least ten Jewish men or ten Jewish proselyte men in the area to establish a synagogue so that tells us something about the makeup of the dynamic of this community and the insurance of what is about to be born. There are no men even though in his vision he saw a man but instead there are women. There are women who have gathered at the river which is an ordinary place for them to meet to pray and Paul goes to meet there with them. One of the women there is Lydia, the seller of purple, a woman of means and God had brought her as He was working in her heart. As Paul preached the Word of God, she received the Word of God and believed in Jesus Christ as her Savior. Here we have the first convert for this Philippian church. Beyond this woman with means comes a woman without means, a young girl who is a slave. She is possessed by an evil spirit, a spirit of divination we are told.

After she has been following Paul and Silas saying 'these are the servants of the God most High' continually, finally Paul turns to her and casts the demon out of her. It sounds like a good thing but the masters who are making money from her telling things of the future,

have no income so they have Paul and Silas arrested, beaten and thrown into the dungeon. But it's here where God is still at work. Even as they are in the dungeon, at midnight as they are worshipping, praising and singing praise to God an earthquake comes that opens their shackles and the doors of the prison but it opens the heart of the keeper of the jail himself – the Philippian jailer.

This is the beginning of the Philippian church. Maybe it's not the most pleasant start to the ministry Paul might have anticipated but it was the way that God chose to work. From this church which became the first church in Europe as Paul was planting churches, Paul developed a relationship of deep love for this church. It was a church that he was very confident in. He praised them for their faithfulness to God for their willing participation with him in ministry, but this was also a church that faced some challenges of its own. We learned at the beginning of Philippians 3 that the Judaizers, the group that had been hounding the Gospel wherever Paul had gone was now here as well. The Judaizers would say 'if you want to believe in Jesus Christ that's okay but,...' then they would add to the belief in Jesus Christ what they believed was certainly important. They most typically believed that if you really wanted to be a Christian you have to

keep the Jewish rites, especially the rite of circumcision.

1. **Ginosko (γινώσκω):** This term refers to knowledge that comes from experience or personal relationship. It involves a process of learning or coming to know something or someone. For example, it is used to describe the knowledge of God that grows through relationship with Him. This type of knowing often implies an intimate, experiential understanding.
 - Example: In John 17:3, "And this is eternal life, that they may know (γινώσκω) You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."
2. **Oida (οἶδα):** This word refers to knowledge that is more intuitive, factual, or complete. It often conveys the sense of understanding or perceiving something fully without the need for further learning. It's a knowing that is more about mental recognition or awareness of facts.
 - Example: In Matthew 6:8, "For your Father knows (οἶδα) what you need before you ask Him."

These two Greek words illustrate different dimensions of knowledge—one based on personal experience and relationship, and the other based on awareness or recognition of facts

Paul begins by helping us understand that knowing Jesus personally is what reorders our values and priorities. He

is masterfully using one of the contrast repetition tools in his tool bag as he is communicating to us that now that he knows Jesus Christ the things that he used to know means nothing at all for instead he values the eternal worth of knowing Christ. Everything he used to see as right standing before God he now sees as utterly useless, as a loss.

PAUL'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF KNOWING CHRIST

By knowing Christ in such a personal way, it reorders the priorities and values of our lives and Paul is ready to move on in ***Philippians 3:12-16*** to show us that knowing Jesus personally reorients our purpose in life. ***Philippians 3:12-14*** says

¹²Not that I have attained, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to lay hold of and make my Own, that for Which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me and made me His Own.

¹³i do not consider, brethren, that I have Captured and made it my Own; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and Straining forward to what lies ahead.

¹⁴I Press on toward the Goal to win the prize to which God in Christ Jesus is Calling us upward.

¹⁵So let those who are Spiritually mature and Full grown have this mind and hold these convictions: and if in any respect you have a different attitude of Mind, God will Make that Clear to you also.

¹⁶Only let us hold true to what we have already attained and walk and order our lives by that.

THE REORDERING OF PAUL'S VALUES

I think Charles Spurgeon hit the nail on the head when he said; *'the less a man thinks of himself the more the man will think of Christ and the more the man thinks of Christ the more he will aim at becoming like Him.'* I think this was Paul's heartbeat and he wants that for us (Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) was a highly influential British preacher, often referred to as the "Prince of Preachers." He was known for his powerful oratory, deep theological insight, and prolific writing).

By these words, we see there was another issue facing this church. There were some who said 'plus Christ is the only way, you can believe in Him but you have to add Judaism and the Jewish rites and get circumcised' yet there were others still who said 'already been there, done that, I've arrived.' Paul repeats himself in Philippians 3:13 because he wants earnestly for the church to understand that if you think you can make it on your own, Paul tells them he knows he can't make it on his own and he has quite a track record, not only as a Pharisee but even as the Apostle out of due season (I Corinthians 15:8) that God had used so dramatically.

No one else in the crowd could say they were stoned to death, raised back to life and walked right back into the same city but Paul could. Yet he is saying that doesn't matter for he doesn't consider that he has attained the resurrection power that he wants. He doesn't consider he has made it to the level of Christianity, pursuing Christ to the level he wants to have it and he actually says he is far from that, but he forgets what lies behind and strains to what lies ahead, toward the prize of the upper call of God in Christ Jesus.

FORMER PRIORITIES: WHAT HE ONCE VALUED

As he is in the race he is not going to look back, forgetting what is behind. If you have been in a race and you look back the tendency will be that you will stumble and fall for looking back is always destructive to winning the race. Paul is telling us that there is no way we can look back as to why we are moving forward in the name of Christ. Forgetting is not simply a mere memory lapse. Forgetting is something deliberate. Paul says he simply obliterates – blocks out everything that is behind him so Paul is not thinking about the legs of the race that has already been run. Everything that he has ever done that was a successful thing in the name of Christ, he is not looking back at and he is not most certainly looking back at his past failures. Remember he was the zealot

who stood by as Stephen was stoned to death with his vote adding to that deed. Paul does not look back and run the race. He strains forward to what lies ahead. I love this analogy of the race. If you have seen a race where 3 or 4 of them are neck and neck coming down to the wire of the finish line and only one of them is going to win, it's usually the one who stretches out as far as he can as he is running with all of his might all the way to the end and usually think he is going to end flat on his face the way he stretches and strains to win.

This is the kind of commitment and effort that Paul says is required when we know Christ. If we know Christ in the power of His resurrection, in His sufferings and become like Him unto His death and we want to gain the prize of the upper call in Christ Jesus, it takes everything we have and we can't look back, if we do, we'll lose course and strength.

NEW PRIORITIES: THE ETERNAL WORTH OF KNOWING CHRIST

The goal, which is the human aspect, is to finish well but the prize which is the God aspect, is the well done good and faithful servant, where we go up into the Judge's booth to receive this accolade that is to be given. That is what we are to pursue. One last thought here is the way Paul helps us tie this all together. Philippians 3:15-16 says [15] Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in

anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. [16] Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

Paul understands that we are works in progress because that is what he was. It's easy to look at someone like Paul and look at our life and think Paul always walked five feet above ground but Paul was always learning, always striving. Romans 7 makes this so clear where Paul was struggling with his own sins and yet he kept pressing on. By the way, those who are mature usually don't think they are mature. It's the same way as those who are holy don't usually see themselves as holy. That's why I love hanging out with elder saints who love the Lord, serve the Lord and are pursuing the Lord because I love to hear how they talk about Jesus all the time. These people have so much of life figured out yet they see themselves quite differently for they see themselves as more work needs to be done on them by the grace of God and still needing to be conformed in the image and likeness of God. They are increasingly humbled as they see the beauty of the work of God in spite of our sin, in the face of our sin and constantly they are becoming more and more like Him until that moment they step to the other side.

That's how I want to finish well. That would be my prayer for us as a church, that we would finish well and not as those who somehow think we have arrived and now we can coast or

not as someone who has arrived and now someone else can step up and do the work.

CONCLUSION

The takeaway is knowing Jesus Christ starts at the moment of salvation but for every believer this is only the beginning. Knowing Jesus Christ remains a lifelong endeavor as we strive to know more of Him in order to become more like Him until we are with Him in glory. While you let that sink in, let's take a little bit of time to do some self-assessment. Whatever it is that we may value or whatever we put our trust in as a means to be right with God or more likely a means of thinking we're in tighter with God thinking we'll receive more of His blessing because of it, whatever it is, if it is anything other than a life changing personal relationship with God with Jesus Christ, it is rubbish. Falsely trusting in our own abilities, our own performance will prove to us not only to fail but will be our downfall. Jesus Christ is calling us to serve Him now. He wants us to keep pressing on.