

Did Paul Say He Wanted to Know God More?

From: In Defense of My Father:
Toward a Better Understanding of the Sovereignty of God

Chapter 1: God's Love Revealed to Us
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Consensus Christianity continues to tell us that we need to know God *more*, and we continue toward this goal like donkeys pursuing carrots on sticks—never able to fully reach our goal. Why is it that so many Christians think they need to know God when the principal benefit of the New Covenant is that we know Him (Jer. 31:34)?

The most common passage used to validate this false way of thinking is Philippians 3:10, where Paul writes, “That I may *know* Him.” It is taught that Paul was saying that His highest *goal* in life was to know God. If *Paul* needed to know God more, it is taught, then certainly so do we.

As with so many misunderstood passages, context is the key to better understanding them. As you read the following passage, allow the Lord to open your eyes to what Paul meant in context.

Philippians 3:7-11

*But what things were gain to me, these I have counted ed loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the **knowledge** of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered ed the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my **own** righteousness, which is **from the law**, but that which is **through faith in Christ**, the righteousness which is from God **by faith**; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

You may have heard this preached incorrectly so many times that it will be difficult for you to observe what Paul is truly saying. You might even need to ask the Lord to help you see this and meditate upon the above passage.

Paul was not saying that he wanted to know Him or know Him more as if it was a lifelong pursuit of his. Rather, those things that were “gain” to him—his religious pedigree spoken of in the preceding verses and his own righteousness from obeying the law—those things he considered rubbish. **He forsook His own righteousness through the law and embraced the righteousness that is by faith, which was given to him upon believing in Jesus SO THAT he could know God and the power of His resurrection.**

Undoubtedly, He is speaking of the moment He first put His faith in Jesus. At that moment, as is true of all those under the New Covenant, Paul knew God. He gave up everything that he formerly thought made Him right before God so that He could know Him.

The remaining verses (12-14) do not refer to knowing God but to “attaining” the resurrection from the dead, which he had not yet obtained because he was still alive. But the fact that he would obtain it was based on his faith in Jesus, not upon knowing him “more.” Before that day would come—when he would attain the resurrection from the dead, Paul desired to “lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” In other words, Paul longed to complete the ministry to which Jesus called him (Acts 20:24).

God “gave His only begotten Son” in death so that all believers would know Him. It was His sovereign will that all who believe in Him know Him. He knows us, and we know Him. The unreachable goal was already provided by Jesus’ blood.