

In 1851 Eduard Hargraves discovered gold in Australia and the gold rush was on. In 1852 alone 370,000 people came to Australia to find gold. Many lived lives in appalling conditions. They left homes and comfort to do backbreaking work digging. They were prepared to sacrifice everything to find gold. The desire for gold all consuming.

Other people may go to the other side of the world to be with someone they love. They leave family, friends, the blue skies and opportunities of Australia perhaps to go to live in some cold wet climate to be with someone they love. This relationship means more to them than anything else.

TRUE MOTIVATION

Paul says, *"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."* (3:8) This is the key verse of this section. Other people may be motivated by desire for gold, for success, pleasure, a good reputation, and so on but knowing Christ is the central inspiring, motivating force in Paul's life. This drives him to travel, preach, face dangers and to suffer. Think of all that Paul went through. He is writing this letter from prison. All he did was motivated by the *"the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."* (3:8)

Knowing Christ is more than knowing about Christ, more than religious observance. It is a living relationship with Christ. Paul has said earlier, *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.* (1:21). This relationship shapes his whole life. How do you respond to his statement?

This is the key to the Christian life. In life it is not just knowing what we ought to do. We need a powerful motivation to do it. I might know I should eat less, get more exercise, help others, tell the truth, go to church or share the gospel with others, but I still might not feel like doing it.

Paul says his motivation is not a sense of duty, or guilt and it is not seeking to earn God's favour. It is his response to *"the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."*

What is your motivation? Really? That gets you out of bed in morning and drives your decisions. How powerfully are you motivated?

Last year I asked if you were a glass half full or half empty sort of person. Or do you feel that your cup is overflowing with blessings like David in Psalm 23? Does your heart have a deep sense of Christ's love for you? Are amazed at his grace; that you are forgiven, a child of God with a place in heaven? Do you have a real sense of the generosity of God's blessing poured upon you? If we do then we will want to rejoice, will gladly serve Jesus.

Some people may rejoice in finding gold, winning a lottery, in their job, their family, or in sport. Paul begins this section, *"Rejoice in the Lord."* (3:1) It is a theme throughout the letter. Because it expresses what is most important to us.

FALSE MOTIVATION

There were people in Paul's time who were motivated by a desire to prove themselves to God by their own actions. They thought that God would be pleased with them because of what they did; people who emphasised circumcision & religious law keeping; who said you have to do all the right things to be accepted by God. They thought God kept score and each action earned points. Paul used to be one of them. He lists all the points he had scored but he says all this is rubbish compared with knowing Christ. He says as far as being accepted by God is concerned:

"I was circumcised on the 8th day but that is rubbish, it counts for nothing."

"I am a child of Abraham, an Israelite. But that is rubbish."

"My pedigree is impeccable; I have Hebrew parents, born in the faithful tribe of Benjamin. But that is rubbish."

"I know all the 'begats' in my family going right back. Rubbish!"

"I went to the right theological college (not Moore College!). I was brought up as a Pharisee. Rubbish!"

"I was so passionate about God's truth I persecuted the church. Rubbish!"

"I kept all the religious rules and regulations to a T. Rubbish!"

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. (3:8-9) All the riches and blessings of salvation come through faith in Christ alone not through our actions.

There are still people who argue that you need faith and works/actions to be saved. Some say it is like a bird, it needs to have two wings to fly. They say in the same way you need faith and your own actions for salvation. This is not true. With a bird both wings do the same thing. But faith and actions do completely different things. It is faith in Christ alone that brings salvation. Our actions are simply a response to what God has done for us. Our actions show the reality of our faith but they are never good enough to save us. They score no points with God.

What human things might we trust in? Brought up an Anglican, rubbish, that won't save you.

Being baptised, confirmed, knowing the creed off by heart? Rubbish!

Going to church every week, teaching Sunday school for 30 years? Rubbish! None of our achievements make us God's children. It is only by faith in Christ.

You? Do you think God accepts you? Why? Do you think your actions make you more deserving of God's love? It is only faith that counts.

CHRISTIAN LIFE

If you have put your faith in Jesus, you know you are forgiven, a child of God, you know God loves you; what do you expect from your Christian life? We had some friends in Canberra who had a ministry in a church there. They were treated very badly by the church and suffered a lot. They thought God had turned against them. They thought this shouldn't happen to them. They felt it was all wrong and so they struggled in their faith.

Listen to what Paul says about the Christian life:

¹⁰ *I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*
(3:10-11)

Knowing Christ involves three things.

1. Knowing the power of Christ's resurrection.
2. Participation in Christ's sufferings
3. Attaining the resurrection from the dead.

1. Knowing the power of his resurrection.

What do you think of when you think of power? A supercharged car, some great machine, a storm, or perhaps atomic power? God's power raised Christ's dead body to resurrection life. It is like God's creative power in bringing everything to existence in the beginning. To know Christ is to have God's

power at work in us, a power to transform us to be more like Jesus, to help us in our weakness and fears and to help us faithfully serve Jesus and to love each other. It is a power that gives us victory over temptation, sin and failure. But that doesn't mean the Christian life is easy.

To know Christ also means:

2. Participation in Christ's sufferings

This is something our friends had not been ready for.

Paul has said earlier in Chapter 1,

²⁹ *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,* ³⁰ *since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.* (1:29-30)

Paul is suffering in prison as he writes and the Philippians face opposition. Paul says this is all a participation in Christ's sufferings. This means our suffering is not meaningless. It certainly doesn't mean God has abandoned us. In any war there will be suffering and death. There will be casualties. We are in a world that has turned away from God. Extending God's kingdom will involve conflict But it has a positive purpose just as Christ's suffering did. God will use our suffering in extending his kingdom.

Paul goes on to say, *becoming like him in his death* (3:10) What does that remind you of? Remember chapter 2? Paul called us *to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus* (2:5). What was that mindset? It was that Christ was prepared to be a servant. That he was obedient to death even dying on a cross. To become like him in his death is to have the same mindset, to have that self-sacrificing servant heart. Paul longs to become more like Jesus in this way, to become like him in his death because this is to truly know Christ.

So knowing Christ involves:

knowing the power of his resurrection
participation in his sufferings but also:-

3. Attaining the resurrection from the dead.

The Christian confidence is that we will share a resurrection like Christ's. We will be raised to eternal life. Paul does say, *"somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead."* (3:12). This does not mean that he is unsure if he will be raised, but he doesn't know if he will die and be raised or if Jesus will return first and he will be transformed. He is not sure how it will come about. But he is confident of his eternal future with Christ. This life may have its suffering but that is only for a time. We will be with Christ and know him fully for eternity.

What Paul longs for is not going to a place called heaven, like some dream holiday on a Pacific island. He longs for a fuller experience of knowing Christ, being with him for eternity. Again it is all about a relationship with Christ. That is the ultimate goal that motivates him and keeps him going in ministry and through suffering. Once again it is about, *the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*"

What keeps you going? What place does Christ's death for you and the future resurrection play?