

Paul's Letter to the Philippians - Lesson 10

Philippians 3:8-11

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Bruce: It's good to be with you today, men. Let's turn in your Bibles, please, to Philippians chapter 3. We'll be looking at verses 8-11. I'll be reading from the English Standard Version of the Bible. Philippians chapter 3, beginning at verse 8.

"Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order 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 comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead." This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. Last week when we visited the church of Philippi by the letter of Paul to the church, Paul warned the Philippian church about those people who would try to pervert the gospel, those people who would try to subtract from the content of the gospel, those who add to it, and those who would alter the gospel. And he warned them very seriously about avoiding those individuals who would pervert the gospel. We learned last week that nobody is going to be converted by a perverted gospel. And so we need to be both defenders of the gospel-- to purify it, to keep it pure, as well as to be proclaimers of the gospel.

And then he defined who were the circumcision. If you notice in those verses 1-7, he describes the circumcision, which would be the true covenant people. He describes those who are truly in Christ. It's another way of describing a person who is in Christ. He is called the true circumcision. That's the reference that he's referring to. And they possess saving faith.

He describes them in three different ways. They put no confidence in the flesh, not trusting in themselves. They glory in Christ Jesus. Their motivation is God's glory. And they worship by the Spirit of God; they are led by the Holy Spirit. So another way of describing a true believer is that they put no confidence in the flesh, they glory in Christ Jesus, and they worship God by the Spirit.

And now he deals with a very, very critical subject that follows very naturally from that discourse we discussed last week. And that is where does one put his confidence to know that he is secure to stand before a holy God? How do I know that I can have confidence that before God He accepts me? And so Paul is going to teach us the next conclusion of this very logically. How do I find my acceptance with God? How do I know with confidence that I can stand before a holy God?

Now Paul went through a very radical transformation in his life when he met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. You can read about that in Acts chapter 9. He realized that all the things that he had been doing really did not gain or earn him salvation. And he

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was not secure or confident to stand before a holy God based upon all the things he had done in just keeping the law. And he began to realize that keeping the law was not the means of pleasing God. Now you can read about that in Paul's life in Romans chapter 7.

So Paul wants to make very certain that his brothers and sisters in Philippi understand where acceptance with God can be found, that you can have confidence to know that I'm standing before a holy God and am accepted, and not being deceived by those people who pervert the gospel or cheapen it, add to it or subtract from it or alter it. And so he uses himself as an example to illustrate where one finds acceptance with God. And he speaks from his own experience.

Now I think there's a pretty good principle here, men. Whenever you are asked to give your testimony, give your own experience with Christ. Don't give somebody else's. Paul is going to give his own testimony about how he came to realize that he could stand before a holy God with acceptance. And so if you ever have a chance, tell of your own experience. Tell them how you came to know Christ. Was it a long time, a short time? Was it through a Bible study? How was it? Did somebody share the gospel with you? Whatever it is, tell your own experience, because that's the most believable thing you have. Don't make something up. Just give your own experience.

Now Paul is going to give us his experience. And this is sort of his testimony about how he understood once and for all how he could be accepted in front of a holy God. So the first thing he talks about is *acceptance*. He's got to rely on another person's righteousness. It's what we would call *alien righteousness*, a righteousness that is outside of yourself. Paul wants us to realize this: that you must rely on another person's righteousness. Paul wants to make sure that Christ enough for the people at Philippi. Paul will tell us that if one clings to one's own righteousness, even to the slightest degree, you can't enjoy Christ's righteousness. The two just don't mix. You can't trust your own righteousness and trust Christ's righteousness at the same time. One must be fully given up before the other can be fully appropriated. You've got to give up your own righteousness. That's why Paul says that a true believer no longer trusts in fleshly activities. So Paul's first expression of his own acceptance before God is to realize that he must be trusting in Somebody else's righteousness.

Now Paul wants to make certain that his fellow believers understand what it means to be in Christ. You notice that this phrase is used in these passages in verses 8-11. *In Christ*. Do you remember how he describes it in chapter 1 verse 1? He describes them as *saints*. What is a saint? A saint is somebody set apart for God's glory.

He describes them as *saints*. He wants them to understand what it means to be in Christ. That's the relationship that's key for him. And so the first thing that he wants us to understand is this. You must rely on another Person for righteousness. It's the righteousness of Christ.

Let's take a look at this righteousness of Christ. Point #1 would be this. *It is Christ's righteousness that we must trust*. It is Christ's righteousness that we must trust to replace our righteousness with Christ's righteousness.

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Now the *in Him* relationship that Paul is referring to means that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the sinner. He's given credit for it. It's imputed to his account so that it is reckoned as his own. You can now claim it as your own.

Now this implies several different things. The imputed righteousness of Christ implies several different things. First of all, it implies *redemption or rescue from the claims of Satan*. We're rescued from the claims of Satan because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. You can read about that in Romans chapter 8, verses 31 and 33.

Transcriber's Note: Romans 8:31-33, NKJV. "*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.*"

Bruce: It also implies *reconciliation with God*. Not only redemption from the claims of Satan, but also reconciliation with God. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

Transcriber's Note: 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, NKJV. "*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*"

Bruce: It also implies *forgiveness of sins*. Ephesians 1:7.

Transcriber's Note: Ephesians 1:7, NKJV. "*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.*"

Bruce: Now when you put all of those together, the stated meaning of *conforming to the law of God* is the last thing that it implies. Romans chapter 8, verses 1-4.

Transcriber's Note: Romans 8:1-4, ESV. "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*"

Bruce: Now let me give you those again. This is critically important for us to understand—the *in Him* relationship. When you are in Christ and Christ's righteousness is imputed to you and given credit to you, you are now wrapped in the robes of righteousness. God views you as righteous. He does not see your own righteousness. He sees His righteousness in Christ. It means this. You've been rescued from the claims of Satan—Romans 8:31 and 33. You been reconciled to God—2 Corinthians 5:18-21. Forgiveness of sins—Ephesians 1:7, and the state of being in conformity to the law of God. You are now in conformity to the law of God—Romans 8, verses 1-4.

That's how we begin to have our acceptance, because our acceptance is based upon the righteousness of Christ. This is the alien righteousness that is given to us, imputed to us and given credit to us, imputed to us and imparted to us by the Holy Spirit.

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The second thing he wants us to know is this. *This righteousness is not merited by the works performed by men.* It is not merited by works performed by men. What Paul means is this: that in no way can the righteousness that counts before God be regarded as coming from my own accomplishments, or in strict accordance with Old Testament law. It's not my own accomplishments.

That's why the definition of a believer, a follower of Christ, is one who no longer trusts in the flesh. You're no longer trusting in your fleshly attitudes or your fleshly activities in being acceptable to God. This means that the righteousness that counts can no longer be coming from me. We don't get credit for our righteousness. Righteous is something that we want to become. We do it as a means of commitment. We do it as a means of expression for of our salvation, but it does not earn your salvation. It expresses it so that we are committed to Christ. We want to be obedient. That's an expression of it. But there is no merit in it in relation to our salvation experience.

I call your attention to Romans 6:23. *"The wages of sin is death."* The penalty is given to those who deserve it. God's righteousness is given to those who don't deserve it.

God *"justifies the ungodly."* The word *justify* means *declare as righteous*. God declares you righteous. He declares the ungodly righteous. That's you and me. *"Christ died for the ungodly."*

Look at Romans chapter 4 verse 5. *"Yet for the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness."* Now the word *believe*, as you know, is the acrostic *dart*—d-a-r-t—to depend upon, adhere to, rely upon and trust in. Those are the four divisions of the word *believe*. It's a very active, aggressive word.

Now let's go back and substitute that into chapter 4 verse 5 of Romans. *"And to the one who does not work, but"* depends upon Christ, adheres to Christ, relies upon Christ and trusts in Christ, *"who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness."* We get credit for the righteousness of Christ because of our belief in Him. That belief is a gift. It's given to the ungodly.

How about Romans chapter 5 verse 6. *"For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly."* God justifies the ungodly. Christ died for the ungodly.

And in summation there's Titus chapter 3 verse 5. *"He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit."* To be accepted by God, it is Christ's righteousness that is credited to us and the righteousness comes from Him.

Paul tells us that this righteousness is appropriated by faith. It's applied and realized by faith. Faith is the hand that receives God's free gift to the undeserving.

Now when you put all of that together, men, it stands to reason that the only righteousness that is acceptable to God is the imputed righteousness of Christ to the sinner, credited to you. And the logical conclusion is that it must be accepted by faith. We can't earn it. It's accepted by faith. You depend upon it. You adhere to it. You rely upon it and you trust in it. It's appropriated by faith. It's given by God but appropriated by faith.

I call your attention to Romans chapter 1, verses 16 and 17. *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes"*—depends

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upon Christ, adheres to Christ, relies upon Christ and trusts in Christ—*“to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written: ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”*

Galatians 2:20 is another good verse for us. Paul says, *“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”* There's the *in Christ* relationship again. *“And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*

You see, men, the critical issue for us is this. How do I know that I have the confidence enough to stand before a holy God and to be acceptable? Paul is giving his testimony. He says, “You know, I did all these things.” Go back and read the previous chapter, how he describes himself. “I did all these things. And none of it counted toward my achieving acceptance before God. It wasn't until I realized that I had to give up all of my righteousness, and to trust the righteousness of Christ that had been imputed to me, given credit to me, that I became acceptable before a holy God.” He has this great confidence. This is his testimony.

He also wants us to know this: *that it comes from God.* This righteousness that's acceptable to God is the righteousness of Christ. It comes by faith. It also comes by God. It comes from God. He wants us to understand the divine origin of righteousness. Righteousness is provided by God. Righteousness is something that God provides for us.

Now what is the definition of righteousness? I think that one of the best definitions I've come across is that *righteousness is who God is, what God possesses, and what God demonstrates in His character.* Everything that God does is righteous. And how in the world can we think that we can earn a righteous that is perfected by the nature and character of God? It's just ludicrous to think that we can do that. It must come from God.

How about Romans chapter 3, verses 24-25? *“And are justified by His grace.”* Remember, *“justified means declared righteous.* Notice the number of times in these verses that it's saying that you're justified. It's obvious that Paul wants us to know that God declares us as righteous and we are justified when we are found acceptable before a holy God. *“And are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins.”*

Christ died for the ungodly. God saves the ungodly. Romans 8:3. *“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.”*

You see, men, righteousness is both possessed by faith and exercised by faith. Our righteousness is something we must exercise. We possess it by faith, and by faith we exercise it, for which we will be held accountable and rewarded. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”* Men, there is a responsibility that we have to live out our commitment to Christ by our love for Christ and our obedience. Paul is going to tell us how to do that in just a moment.

He's just now giving us his testimony. He'll say, “This is what I now began to realize, that all the things that I used to do—keeping the law, all the things that I used to do in my

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ecclesiastical heritage—all that came to naught when it came to being made acceptable before God.” It all had to do with the imparted and imputed righteousness of Christ to him.

And lastly I want you to see this. *It results in striving after spiritual perfection.* Now this is where it really gets interesting. Paul is saying that now that I understand that I am acceptable before a holy God, what is my response? My response is to strive for spiritual perfection. I must exercise this. I must actively pursue it and work at it. And the experience of every person that has been brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light, who has been filled in their hearts with Christ's abiding love, will sing this song by E. E. Hewitt:

*“More about Jesus would I know,
More of His grace to others show.
More of His saving fullness see,
More of His love who died for me.
More, more about Jesus,
More, more about Jesus.
More of His saving fullness see,
More of His love who died for me.”*

Now that's Paul's testimony. Again, in summary he is saying this. “I began to realize that all the things that I did were for naught when it came to standing before a holy God. And what gave me the assurance that I could stand before a holy God was to understand the righteousness of God imputed to me as an ungodly sinner.”

And when he did that, now he says, “This is what my ambition is.” He goes from the point of acceptance. Once you realize that you've been accepted by God, what is your response? What should it be?

Participant: Thanks, gratitude.

Bruce: Absolutely. It's one of gratitude and thanksgiving. Paul said that it's got to be something more than that. You've got to have the ambition to rely upon Another's identity. In other words, I want to know Christ more.

The thing that Paul says is this. “Once I began to realize that I was totally acceptable before a holy God, the thing that I wanted to do was to know Christ more and more and more. I wanted to know Christ more and more.” That was a response from an attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving. His motivation was not guilt. He wasn't earning anything. His motivation was gratitude. And the thing that I want to do now more than anything else, my ambition, is to rely upon Another's identity and get to know Him. I want to know Christ more. One of the things that gratitude does for us, men, is that it drives us to the throne of grace to see Christ more clearly. Gratitude prompts us to see Christ more clearly.

So Paul says this. First of all, I want to know Him more deeply. In my response to my now being assured of my acceptance before a holy God, the consequences are that I want to know Christ more deeply. I want to know Him more intimately.

I believe that Paul is a perfectionist. He wanted to know as much about Christ as he could. He wanted to be like Him as much as he could. He says, “I don't know how long it

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will take, but I want to be like Him.” He wanted to gain as much of an understanding of Christ’s Person and love as possible.

He does that in a couple of different ways. Paul says that to know Him refers to a knowledge not only of the mind, but also of the heart. He understands the facts of now being accepted before a holy God, but he wants to go deeper than that. I want to become more intimately related to Christ, my Savior and my Lord, as I go through my life. I want to become more intimate in my relationship with Him. I want to know Him more.

He wants to know not merely facts about Christ; he wants to know about His sufferings. He wants to know what He went through in His suffering, because Paul’s logic is this. Paul wants to experience what Christ experienced. “If I could just enter into and experience what Christ went through, I’ll get to know Him more deeply. I’m going to love Him more tenderly. I’ll become more oriented toward my obedience. I want to know Him as deeply as I can. The only way I can do that is to enter into what He went through in His life. That partly means suffering.”

Now the verb *know* in this particular passage is a very intimate and personal knowledge. It was used by Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, as Adam knew Eve. It means the height of intimate knowledge.

Paul says this. I now understand how I can have confidence to stand before a holy God. I now understand that. The result of that is this. Now I want to have a more intimate knowledge of my Savior. I want to know Him in a more intimate way.

This is what Paul wanted from Christ. That was his ambition. His ambition was not to become the head of a movement. His ambition was not to be a better writer. His ambition was to get to know Christ more deeply, because he now understood why he was acceptable before a holy God because of the righteousness of Christ.

So there are several things he wants to know. He wants to know *the power of His resurrection*. Paul desires an ever-increasing knowledge of the power that proceeds from the resurrection of the risen Lord.

Now I think the reason Paul wanted that was because the resurrected Savior assured Paul through the Spirit of his justification, God declaring him righteous, because when God raised the Son He proved that He accepted the sacrifice. The ransom was paid by Christ.

You see, the reason that Paul wants to understand the power of the resurrection is that if God has the power of the resurrection, that power of resurrection gives me the assurance of my justification, because the ransom was paid. Christ’s sacrifice was accepted by God. Therefore I have the assurance of my justification because of the resurrection of Christ. If I could just experience a little bit of that resurrection mindset, I’m going to more clearly understand why I’ve been justified to stand before a holy God, because the ransom was paid by Christ. He wants to understand the power of the resurrection.

Notice Romans chapter 4 verse 25. “*Who was delivered up for our trespasses, and raised for our justification.*” Raised for our justification. You see, the resurrection of Christ is the proof of your justification. That’s what Paul wants to experience. He said, “If I could just understand a little bit more about this resurrection power, I’m going to

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understand more clearly the power of my justification, and why I can with gratitude stand before a holy God, because I understand the resurrection." He was raised for our justification. That's my assurance.

Matthew 20 verse 28. *"Even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."* You see, the resurrection proves that God accepted the ransom. Paul's theory is this. If I could just grasp the glory of the resurrection power, I'm going to more fully understand my personal justification. And this means that knowing the power of the resurrection will radically impact my daily life because it will be motivated by gratitude.

Notice Romans 8, verses 10-11. *"But if Christ is in you,"*—there again, in Christ,—*"although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."*

You see, there's a direct correlation between the resurrection power of Christ and your and my daily life. And Paul says that if I can just grasp that more deeply, it's going to impact my life more critically, because I'm going to see the relation between the resurrection from the dead and my daily life. Christ is in me. The Spirit is in me. *"If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit."*

That's present tense. Things are going to change in your life. This is not just a one-time practice. It will impact your life dramatically when you understand that. Paul says, "If I could grasp that just a little bit, it's going to change the way that I live. It will change the way that I live."

Let me draw your attention to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. Would you turn with me there? 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 10-11. Let's go back to verse 7. 2 Corinthians 4, beginning at verse 7.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay." And what is the treasure? The life of Christ. You've got the gospel, the life of Christ in you.

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our lives. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you."

That's normal Christian living. Part of us dies every day, just in the process of living. But as we die in this earthly body, what comes out of us is the life of Christ.

If you have a 55-gallon drum and you fill it with water, and you give somebody the opportunity to hit it with an axe or a saw or a hammer, what would happen to the contents of the water? Until it's broken up, it would be in one place. The impact is only in one place. But if you break up that 55-gallon drum by abuses, what happens to the content? It spills all over the place. That's what happens to our lives. As we are broken by the forces

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of life, hassled but not defeated, we go through life and what comes out of us is the life of Christ because the life of Christ is in us through the Spirit. That's how we begin to make an impact. And the degree to which we can understand that will be the degree to which we will recognize that when troubles come into our lives we need to say what? "Thanks," because all You're doing is giving me the opportunity to have the life of Christ in me, to fill the people who I'm with with the aroma of life." That's how we give away the life of Christ. "*So death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.*"

Paul next wants to say that not only do I want to understand His resurrection power, but I want *to understand and to share in His sufferings*. Paul wants to participate more and more in the reproaches of Christ, and more and more in the afflictions of Christ. Notice how he says it in Colossians—Colossians 1:24. "*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, that is, the church.*"

Paul says, "Look. It would be an honor for me to be afflicted because of the cause of Christ. I'd more and more like to be part of the reproaches that are given to Christ because I'm filling up in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, the church." His desire is to participate in the sufferings of Christ.

It's part of his life of personal holiness. Now have you ever thought about the correlation between personal holiness and personal suffering? Paul is saying, "If I could just enter into more of His suffering,, experience that, make that a part of my life, bear some of the reproaches, bear some of the sufferings, I'm going to understand what it was like for Christ to go through these sufferings. In doing that I'm participating in sufferings, and that's part of my personal holiness. It's going to help me to become more holy."

That's his ambition. He used the word *ambition*. That's what Paul is describing. He wants to become more personally holy. And the result of that is because of his confidence in knowing that he can stand before a holy God because he is justified by faith. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, the words that stand out to me in this passage are that Paul has counted all things as rubbish. I guess the word is *dung*. And also, the part about wanting to share in His sufferings. That kind of bothers me a little bit, because I haven't come to that point yet. I have to be honest. I don't pray, "Lord, I want to share in the fellowship of Your sufferings today." Can you comment on that?

Bruce: I sure can. Here's my silver bullet. You're not the only Lone Ranger.
(Laughter)

Don: All right.

Bruce: I'm with you on that. I was deeply convicted. This is what Paul's ambition was. Now is that my ambition? No. I want it to be, but it's not there yet. This is something that is progressive. Revelation in God's life is progressive in us. It's not instantaneous. Just because we understand that we're accepted by a holy God through justification does not necessarily mean that we're going to be perfectly holy in every aspect of our lives. That's why I have a responsibility to work at that, to be motivated by that. So Don, your point is well taken. I'm not at that level anyway. That's the desire that I hope that the Holy Spirit would continue to build in my life. But I'm not totally there because it's progressive. That's something that happens to us over time. It's progressive.

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Revelation is progressive. God doesn't give us everything at once at the same time. Yes, Ted?

Ted: There was a pregnant pause. (*Laughter*) I think Don has raised an excellent point. I mean, this verse that you're reading now is my life verse. And when I first read it, I meditated on it for years. I know Paul welcomed and embraced suffering, but he did not pursue it. And this was a problem in the early church, where Christians were actually coming into the arena and saying, "Feed me to the lions."

And they said, "No, you don't do that. You wait for them to come and get you." I guess that's the first point.

The second point is that you were talking about progressive revelation. There is also *progressive experience*. In my earlier days I was a runner. I didn't go out and run a 10K right off the bat. I ran maybe half a mile.

The same thing is true with suffering. We get it in small doses initially. Sometimes we get it in big doses. But I'm just thinking. Don, when you went to live on your own, there was a lot of suffering from that event.

Don: It's kind of joyful now. (*Laughter*)

Ted: But in some ways you went through a lot of agony about that. But the suffering had the impact of changing you.

Don: True, but that pales into insignificance when it comes to persecution that our brothers and sisters are enduring, or whatever.

Ted: That's almost irrelevant, because the thing is that Satan would like to say that you're really not suffering unless you're really suffering big time. You're preparing for greater suffering. But you went through some suffering yourself. I know you did, and I have, too. The problem is that we look at it as a bad thing, rather than what Bruce was saying, as a good thing that's going to shape us in His image.

Bruce: I think the important thing in all of this discussion—and Ted, thanks for your comments,— Jim?

Jim: I just want to make the comment that I've thought about this many times. When Christians were in the arena with the lions, I've often thought that they would have been there together as a group of people. And I would imagine that some of them would have taken the place of others first, trying to protect another sister or brother, rather than hiding. (*Unclear*)

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: I'm just wondering whether this could be. When a brother goes through something and our hearts ache, is this what he's talking about? That's my question to you. Is our Christlike growth that our brother goes through difficulties and we pray for him, and we feel sorrow in our heart, or pain, or empathy? That is Christlike behavior. Is that wrong?

Bruce: No, I think that would be consistent with Colossians 1:24, "*filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of His body, the church.*" When one element of the body suffers, we all suffer. And so we need to understand that we need to be empathetic to those who are suffering and be a part of that with them, so that they can

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bear that burden not only by themselves, but also with us. This is a bodily function. It's the church's function.

Now Paul is not suggesting, nor am I suggesting, that Paul was praying for persecution. He's not saying, "Lord, give me this," or "give me that." That's not what he is saying. He's saying, "When it comes, let me have the right response and the right attitude." We don't pray for persecution. God will bring that to us in His own time for His own reasons.

Remember, God is sovereign. The sovereignty of God means this: that whatever God permits in my life is for His glory and my good. When that persecution comes and the difficulties come, we accept it with the right attitude. That's what Paul is suggesting. That's how we begin to experience it progressively. But I'm not suggesting that he's saying, "I'm going to go and pray for this or pray for that." Paul is not praying that he's going to be crucified. He's saying that when persecution comes because I'm a member of the body of Christ, let me have the right attitude, the right response. I think that Paul's desire to participate in the sufferings of Christ was part of his longing for personal holiness.

And lastly, he says that "I also want to understand what it means *to attain the resurrection from the dead.*" Now I want to read a passage for you. Go to Romans chapter 6, verses 4-11. Now Paul wishes here to be dead to sin. He wants to be dead to sin. He also implies that he wants to die to his self-righteousness and his self-centeredness. He's not saying that he wants to be crucified; that's not what he's saying. But listen to what he says in Romans chapter 6, verses 4-11.

"We were buried with Him therefore by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His. We know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.

"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over Him. For the death He died He died to sin once for all. But the life He lives He lives to God. So you must also consider yourselves dead to sin, and alive to God in Christ Jesus." We must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus.

Paul is not saying that he wants to be crucified like Christ. That's not what he's saying. He's just saying that I want to get rid of all the sin in my life—my self-centeredness, my selfishness, and all those things that I used to cherish. I want those things to die, and I need to consider myself dead to all those things now that I am alive to Christ.

Subtly, I think that it also means this. I think it means that he would like to be a blessing to other people, as Christ was a blessing to the people in His death and resurrection. In other words, there are so many blessings that we acquire because of the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ. And Paul is saying, "If I can experience some of that, maybe I can be a blessing to some other people, because I'm dead to my sin

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and alive in Christ through grace." Now Paul wants to be conformed to His death in that attitude, but he's not suggesting that he wants to be crucified like Christ was.

Let me conclude with this statement that I read once that I think was very touching and very meaningful. "*When we as Christians appropriate the saving value of Christ's death and resurrection*",--in other words, when we make it our own,--"*we die to sin, for the guilt of sin has been removed, and sin's power over us is gradually reduced, until finally removed by the Holy Spirit at death.*"

Justification is freedom from the penalty of sin. *Sanctification* is freedom from the power of sin. *Glorification* is freedom from the presence of sin. That's what awaits us men—freedom from the presence of sin.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: May God be pleased to help us understand fully what it means to be accepted by a holy God through the work of justification by faith alone. And as a motivation, may we desire to be more Christlike and become more conformed to the image of Christ by the revelation of our personal holiness, as God works in our lives through grace. May it be so for Jesus' sake.

Let's pray. Well, Lord, I hope we didn't mess that up. (*Laughter*) Father, if I said anything that's inconsistent with who You are in all of Your nature and Your righteousness, I pray, Lord, that You'd be pleased to move that away from us, remove that from our memories. Give us those things that will be consistent with who You are in all of Your glory, so that we might understand what it means to be fully accepted before a holy God because of the sacrifice of the Person and work of Christ. And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen! (*Applause*)