

To Know Christ
Philippians 3:4b-14

In the movie, *Frequency*, a son is able to speak with his father 30 years in the past over a radio, due to some quirk in the laws of physics. At one point in the story the boy sent back one word to a friend in the past. The word was “Yahoo.” Just imagine if, 30 years ago, you knew what you know now and had invested in Yahoo or had done a lot of things, if only you had known...

There is real value in knowing. We place a high premium on who you know, what you know and what you’ve got to show for it. Moreover, we live in a time when we are being pressed forward into a future where technology is unfolding faster than we can keep up. That’s why there is a movement to declare today as No-Tech day, a day when everyone is invited to put down the Blackberrys and iPods just to take a break from fantasy people and the world-wide web, and re-engage with real people in a real world.

Still, there is a sense that in this High Velocity, High Frequency world, not only is what you know important, but more and more people are feeling that **WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW CAN HURT YOU!**

In the apostle’s world, knowledge was also highly valued. To know something meant much more than having an opinion, but to see and experience and understand real people and things in a real world. Paul tells us in today’s lesson something of who he knew and what he knew and what he had to show for it. Paul knew

what he knew to the point of being “blameless”; but then he encountered a kind of knowing that changed everything. He discovered that *what you don’t know CAN hurt you, if you don’t know Christ!*

For Paul, the greatest value of knowing anything is knowing Christ Jesus as Lord. But it’s more than knowing *about* Christ. It’s more than reading of his life and teachings or knowing theology or memorizing scripture verses. Lots of people know about him and have their opinions about him, but not all know the real person Jesus as the real Lord. So when Paul said he wants to *know* Christ, he’s talking about the knowing that comes through faith, the knowing that leads to trusting him with everything, because he has given everything for you. This kind of knowing is a gift and a goal toward which we press. It is a call to enter into the power of a love that makes everything else look like rubbish compared to it. For Paul, nothing comes between him and Christ.

I went to seminary with the son of one of my professors. It so happened that the both of us were taking a class with Mark’s mom, Betty, and we were given the assignment to do something creative with a biblical theme. So Mark and his group decided to do a video spoofing some of the popular commercials of the time. When it came time to view the video before the whole class, there were skits on shirt commercials, replacing their logos with biblical symbols and the like, but the very last one really got everyone’s attention. There was Mark, stretched out on a couch, apparently with no clothes on, with only a copy of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion* strategically placed. Then, with all

seriousness, he says to the camera: *Nothing comes between me and my Calvin!* I wish you could have seen his mother's face!

Paul's testimony challenges us to demonstrate much the same kind of commitment to our Lord: Nothing comes between us and knowing Christ Jesus! Not the cars we drive, not the clothes we wear. Not the houses we own, not our hobbies we share.

I'm reminded of Mary's words to the disciples when she found the tomb empty: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know..." Who are "they"? "They" can become for us all the forces that make it hard for us to know Christ. "They" would keep Christ away so that we will not know him.

"They" are who Paul renounces here so fervently and passionately. Paul knew that it's not about what we might have done or could have done or what good intentions we may have had in the past. It's not about all the things we know or fear not knowing. "The righteousness from God based on faith" calls us to know Christ as the suffering and resurrected Lord. The early church understood that this kind of knowing meant 3 things: to acknowledge what God has done by grace, to grasp what needs to be done for the sake of Christ, and then go and do it.

So take with you these 3 words: Grace, Grasp and Go! Remembering that when it comes to Christ, WHO you don't know CAN hurt you!