

THE EXPERIENCE OF CHRIST

Having No Confidence in the Flesh and Counting All Things to Be Loss on Account of Christ and the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ (Message 5)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 3:3-8

- I. We who believe in Christ should have no confidence in the flesh; our confidence should be wholly in the Lord—Phil. 3:3b:
 - A. The flesh in [Philippians 3:3 and 4](#) comprises all that we are and have in our natural being.
 - B. In these verses *confidence in the flesh* refers to all the good items or qualities that we have in the flesh; the honorable, lovable, and superior aspects of our natural being are still the flesh.
 - C. The greatest problems among God’s children are that they do not know what the flesh is and that their flesh has not been dealt with—[Rom. 8:8](#); [Gal. 5:24](#):
 1. Self-confidence is the characteristic of the flesh; the most obvious sign of unchecked flesh is self-confidence—cf. [3:2-3](#).
 2. Confidence in the flesh keeps us from Christ—[Phil. 3:3-4, 10](#).
 - D. As believers in Christ, we should be those who have no confidence in the flesh, no trust in our natural ability or heritage—[vv. 3-6](#):
 1. Although we have been regenerated, we may continue to live in our fallen nature, boast in what we do in the flesh, and have confidence in our natural qualifications—[Gal. 3:2-3](#).
 2. Only when we have been enlightened by God will we be able to say truly that we have no trust in our natural qualifications, ability, or intelligence; only then will we be able to testify that we have no confidence in the flesh and that our confidence is wholly in the Lord—[Phil. 3:3](#); [Prov. 3:5-6](#). [108]
 - E. If we would experience Christ, we must not trust in the flesh but trust only in the Lord; this is the secret to the experience of Christ—[Phil. 3:3](#).

- II. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is derived from the excellency of His person—[v. 8](#); [Matt. 17:5](#); [Col. 1:13](#):
 - A. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is not the knowledge that belongs to Christ, the knowledge that Christ Himself has; rather, this knowledge is our subjective knowing of Christ—[John 17:3](#):
 - 1. In [Philippians 3:8](#) *knowledge* actually means a revelation, a vision, concerning Christ and His excellency—[Gal. 1:15-16](#); [Eph. 1:17-23](#).
 - 2. When Christ was revealed to him by God, Paul saw the supereminence, the supreme preciousness, and the surpassing worth of Christ—[Acts 9:3-5, 20, 22](#); [22:13-16](#); [26:13-16](#).
 - B. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is the excellency of Christ realized by us—[John 16:13-14](#); [Gal. 1:15-16](#):
 - 1. We need to have a vision of the preciousness of Christ and the excellency of the knowledge of the all-inclusive, unlimited Christ—[1 Pet. 2:4, 7](#); [Col. 1:12, 15-19](#); [2:2-3, 9, 16-17](#); [3:4, 10](#).
 - 2. The excellency of the knowledge of Christ comes by revelation; without the revelation concerning Christ, we cannot know Christ—[Matt. 16:17](#); [11:27](#); [Gal. 1:15-16](#); [John 17:3](#).
 - C. If we would experience Christ, we first need to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ—[Phil. 3:7-10](#):
 - 1. We cannot experience Christ without knowing Him through a revelation of Him—[Gal. 1:15-16](#); [2:20](#); [4:19](#).
 - 2. If we do not have a higher revelation of Christ, we cannot have a higher experience of Christ—[1 John 5:20](#).
 - 3. Our experience of Christ cannot surpass the excellency of our knowledge of Christ—[Eph. 1:17-21](#); [3:14-19](#).
- III. On account of (or because of) the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Paul counted all things to be loss—[Phil. 3:8a](#):
 - A. Paul placed great value on the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; this is indicated by the words *my Lord*, which convey his intimate, tender feelings concerning Christ. [109]
 - B. Paul's eyes were opened to see the excellency of the wonderful, all-inclusive Christ; on account of this excellency, he counted as loss all things, whether they related to religious gain or natural gain.
 - C. In [verse 8](#) *all things* indicates that Paul dropped not only religious things but all things on account of the excellency of the

knowledge of Christ Jesus; thus, to Paul, the loss of all things was the loss of everything.

- D. The more we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, the more we will count as loss everything religious and natural—[vv. 4-8a](#).
- IV. On account of Christ, Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them as refuse in order to gain Christ—[vv. 7, 8b](#):
- A. *All things* in [verse 8](#) includes the things of religion, philosophy, and culture; Paul suffered the loss of all these things because they were substitutes for Christ, hooks used by Satan to keep people from Christ and the experience of Christ.
 - B. We gain Christ by suffering the loss of all things that were once a gain for us and by counting them as refuse—[vv. 4, 8](#):
 1. The Greek word for *gain* in [verse 8](#) means “to secure, to obtain, to lay hold of.”
 2. To gain Christ is to gain His person, to experience, enjoy, and take possession of all His unsearchable riches—[Eph. 3:8](#).
 3. Like Paul, we should not only count all things as loss on account of Christ ([Phil. 3:7](#)) but also suffer the loss of all things and count all things as refuse ([v. 8](#)).
 4. The more we suffer the loss of all things and count them as refuse on account of Christ, the more we will gain Christ for our experience and enjoyment—[vv. 7-8](#).

MESSAGE FIVE

HAVING NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH AND COUNTING ALL THINGS TO BE LOSS ON ACCOUNT OF CHRIST AND THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

In [Philippians 4:12-13](#) Paul says, “I know also how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to hunger, both to abound and to lack. I am able to do all things in Him who empowers me.” Paul spoke of the secret of experiencing Christ at the end of the book of Philippians. Actually, the entire book of Philippians is a revelation of Paul’s secret to experiencing Christ. In this message we will mainly focus on [chapter 3](#) because this

chapter reveals some of the details and background to this secret. [Philippians 4:12](#) is a general statement and an all-inclusive, concluding word related to Paul's secret. Underlying this are all the experiences unveiled throughout the rest of this book.

The experience of Christ should issue in the enjoyment of Christ. In this message we will see that there is a prerequisite for the experience of Christ and thereby for the enjoyment of Christ. What precedes the experience of Christ is the revelation of Christ. In [Philippians 3](#) Paul speaks of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. This revelation of Christ caused him to pursue Christ, his pursuit of Christ caused him to experience Christ, and his experience of Christ caused him to enjoy Christ.

The book of Philippians is unique. It is not a book of teaching. Instead, it is Paul's description of his experience of Christ. Paul was the top one in the experience of Christ because he had the highest revelation of Christ. No one had as high a revelation of Christ as Paul.

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST

What do we mean when we speak about the revelation of Christ? The account of Paul's conversion, of the Lord appearing to him on the road to Damascus, is recorded three times in the book of Acts—in [9:1-9](#); [22:5-11](#); and [26:12-18](#). When we read that extraordinary account, we might come to the conclusion that the revelation of Christ that Paul received was something outward, because the accounts indicate that as he was traveling [111] on the road to Damascus, a light brighter than the sun shined around him, and he fell to the ground ([vv. 13-14](#)). However, he did not see anything, because he was blinded by the light. He heard someone speak to him, but he did not see anyone with his physical eyes. We should not think that Paul's revelation was something outward. In [Galatians 1:15-16](#) Paul says, "When it pleased God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles." Paul's own account indicates that Christ was revealed not to him but in him, showing that the revelation of Christ is something inward, something subjective.

The title of this message—"Having No Confidence in the Flesh and Counting All Things to Be Loss on Account of Christ and the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ"—puts two matters together because Paul puts them together. In [Philippians 3](#) Paul combines these two points. This is very meaningful. As we consider the points in this message outline, we will

realize that there is a relationship between these two matters.

[Philippians 3:3](#) says, “We are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.” By using the word *circumcision*, Paul was referring not to the Jewish religious ritual of circumcision but to spiritual circumcision. Likewise, his use of the word *flesh* is not the same in meaning as the word commonly used among us. This is why it is very important that we understand Paul’s definition of the flesh. In [verse 4](#) he says, “Though I myself have something to be confident of in the flesh as well. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I more.” Then in [verses 5 and 6](#) he lists seven points that he considers to be the flesh:

Circumcised the eighth day; of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, persecuting the church; as to the righteousness which is in the law, become blameless.

We may not consider these to be the flesh, but Paul did, because his definition of the flesh was different than our concept of the flesh. Concerning these seven things, he says,

But what things were gains to me, these I have counted as loss on account of Christ. But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ. ([vv. 7-8](#)) [112]

I love this word. Paul speaks here in a very personal way. This is his personal testimony.

In these few verses Paul makes two crucial comparisons. In [Hebrews 12:3](#) he says, “Compare Him who has endured such contradiction by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary, fainting in your souls.” This shows that we are to make a comparison between Christ and other things, which is what Paul does in [Philippians 3](#). In [verse 7](#) he compares all the things that were gains to him to Christ, and he comes to the conclusion that all those things, which he thought were gains, were a total loss in comparison to Christ. Furthermore, Paul makes a second comparison by comparing not merely the things that were gains to him in the past but also all things to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. After making this comparison, he concludes that the aggregate value of all things is equivalent to refuse when compared to gaining Christ. Sometimes when we talk about the sufferings, persecutions, or

misunderstandings that we have endured for the Lord, for the gospel, and for the church life, we may speak of the price we paid. If so, we are not making a proper comparison, or at least we are not properly valuing Christ. Did Paul pay a big price or a small price? He said that he suffered the loss of all things so that he could gain Christ. What we consider to be a big price or a small price depends on how we value Christ. If we value Christ the way Paul did, we will say, “The loss of all things is a bargain—I am giving up refuse and I am gaining Christ.” May the Lord increase our valuation, our appreciation, of Christ.

**WE WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST
NEEDING TO HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH;
OUR CONFIDENCE NEEDING TO BE WHOLLY IN THE LORD**

We who believe in Christ should have no confidence in the flesh; our confidence should be wholly in the Lord (v. 3b). In saying that he had no confidence in the flesh, Paul meant that he did not have any confidence in his being zealous for the law, being blameless according to the law, being a Pharisee teaching the law, or being of the race of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin, and a Hebrew born of Hebrews. He had no confidence in those things any longer because he had seen Christ. Previously, what Paul treasured the most was the law. Only the Jews had the law. Paul was zealous for the law, taught the law, and tried to be blameless according to the law. The law was everything to him until he saw Christ. When he received the revelation of Christ, the law became nothing to him. [113]

**The Flesh in [Philippians 3:3 and 4](#)
Comprising All That We Are and Have
in Our Natural Being**

The flesh in [Philippians 3:3 and 4](#) comprises all that we are and have in our natural being. The flesh comprises not merely evil things. In fact, Paul does not mention any evil thing in this chapter. We all have evil things in our flesh, but Paul does not mention those when speaking of all things. He only mentions the seemingly positive aspects of the flesh. By this we can understand Paul’s thought. His definition of the flesh is whatever we are, good or bad, in our natural being.

Many of the things of the flesh that Paul mentions are related to Judaism, that is, to religion. According to [Philippians 3](#), religion belongs to the flesh and needs to be repudiated in order to gain Christ. This may surprise us;

nevertheless, that is what Paul is talking about in this chapter. This matches his thought in [Galatians 1](#), where we see that religion is a substitute, a replacement, for Christ. As long as Paul was full of zeal for religion, there was no room in him for Christ. He was a vessel full of the law, of zeal for the law, and of righteousness according to the law. There was no room for Christ. That is why religion is included as an item of the flesh.

In [Matthew 7:21-23](#) the Lord Jesus said,

Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he who does the will of My Father who is in the heavens. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, was it not in Your name that we prophesied, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name did many works of power? And then I will declare to them: I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.

We have to understand Paul's word in [Philippians 3](#). He is talking about not only the things that he acquired from birth, including race and even his tribe, but also about the things he acquired in religion, in Judaism, because those things became a replacement and a substitute for Christ.

**In These Verses *Confidence in the Flesh*
Referring to All the Good Items or Qualities
That We Have in the Flesh;
the Honorable, Lovable, and Superior Aspects
of Our Natural Being Still Being the Flesh**

In these verses *confidence in the flesh* refers to all the good items or qualities that we have in the flesh; the honorable, lovable, and superior [114] aspects of our natural being are still the flesh. We are not so foolish as to think that the fallen and evil aspects of our flesh can be a replacement for Christ. Rather, it is the good things, the honorable things, and our strengths that replace Christ.

**The Greatest Problems
among God's Children Being That
They Do Not Know What the Flesh Is
and That Their Flesh Has Not Been Dealt With**

The greatest problems among God's children are that they do not know

what the flesh is and that their flesh has not been dealt with ([Rom. 8:8](#); [Gal. 5:24](#)). Until now we may not have been clear as to what the flesh is. If we are not clear concerning what the flesh is, there is no way for our natural being to be touched. This was Paul's as well as Peter's experience. Peter was also very zealous and very much in the flesh. Job was such a one in the Old Testament. He was very good, full of integrity, all of which was the flesh and which kept him from knowing God Himself.

Self-confidence
Being the Characteristic of the Flesh;
the Most Obvious Sign of Unchecked Flesh
Being Self-confidence

Self-confidence is the characteristic of the flesh; the most obvious sign of unchecked flesh is self-confidence (cf. [3:2-3](#)). In [Philippians 3:3](#) Paul says, "We are the circumcision, the ones who serve by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh." After Paul had seen Christ, he had no confidence in the flesh. However, before he saw Christ, he as Saul of Tarsus was full of confidence in the flesh. He was very convinced that what he was doing was right. That is confidence in the flesh. Self-confidence is the main characteristic of the flesh. Building up our self-confidence is what we are taught in society. We are told to be confident in ourselves. If we are not self-confident, we are regarded as weak. It may sound good, but once we see Christ, we lose all confidence in our flesh.

Confidence in the Flesh
Keeping Us from Christ

Confidence in the flesh keeps us from Christ ([vv. 3-4, 10](#)). If we are full of the confidence of the flesh, we have no realization of our need of [\[115\]](#) Christ and no room in our vessel for Christ. Therefore, confidence in the flesh becomes a very big substitute for Christ and a very big impediment to the experience of Christ. The experience of Christ begins when we lose all confidence in the flesh. This is Paul's testimony. If we want to experience Christ, we must start by losing all confidence in the flesh.

**As Believers in Christ,
Our Needing to Be Those**

**Who Have No Confidence in the Flesh,
No Trust in Our Natural Ability or Heritage**

As believers in Christ, we should be those who have no confidence in the flesh, no trust in our natural ability or heritage (vv. 3-6). We all have some trust in our natural ability or heritage. No matter what our heritage is, we all think that ours is the best. We all have a natural heritage as well as some natural abilities, plus some kind of education, training, and religious upbringing. Our confidence in all these things must go, or we will not have the experience of Christ.

*Although We Have Been Regenerated,
Our Possibly Continuing to Live in Our Fallen Nature,
Boasting in What We Do in the Flesh,
and Having Confidence in Our Natural Qualifications*

Although we have been regenerated, we may continue to live in our fallen nature, boast in what we do in the flesh, and have confidence in our natural qualifications (Gal. 3:2-3). One of the wonderful things in the church life is that we do not pay attention to natural qualifications at all. In fact, we recognize that natural qualifications are a hindrance rather than a help. When the meeting halls in Anaheim and Huntington Beach were being built, I participated by laying stones. I learned how to do stonework. Then when the meeting hall in Irving was being built, I told the brother coordinating for the construction that I knew how to lay stone. He said, "Good, we need you to drive a truck." But I said, "Brother, you need to understand that I am a terrible driver. I can get lost going home from the meeting hall. If you have me driving a truck around Texas, trying to buy materials, it will be a disaster." He said, "That is good." Many years later, I asked the same brother, "Why did you let me drive the truck?" He said, "Brother, we just wanted to make sure you had a real good experience of the cross." It surely was a good learning to not trust in any of my abilities or qualifications. [116]

*Only When We Have Been Enlightened by God
Our Being Able to Say Truly That We Have No Trust
in Our Natural Qualifications, Ability, or Intelligence;
Only Then Our Being Able to Testify That
We Have No Confidence in the Flesh*

and That Our Confidence Is Wholly in the Lord

Only when we have been enlightened by God will we be able to say truly that we have no trust in our natural qualifications, ability, or intelligence; only then will we be able to testify that we have no confidence in the flesh and that our confidence is wholly in the Lord ([Phil. 3:3](#); [Prov. 3:5-6](#)).

**If We Would Experience Christ, Our Having
to Not Trust in the Flesh but Trust Only in the Lord;
This Being the Secret to the Experience of Christ**

If we would experience Christ, we must not trust in the flesh but trust only in the Lord; this is the secret to the experience of Christ ([Phil. 3:3](#)). In Message 4 we saw that abiding in Christ is the secret of experiencing Christ. In this point we see that trusting in the Lord is the secret to the experience of Christ. Experiencing Christ by trusting in the Lord precedes our experiencing Christ by abiding in Him, because the revelation of Christ that enables us to trust Him comes first. Through a revelation of Christ by having the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, we lose all confidence in the flesh.

**THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST
BEING DERIVED FROM THE EXCELLENCY OF HIS PERSON**

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is derived from the excellency of His person ([v. 8](#); [Matt. 17:5](#); [Col. 1:13](#)). The knowledge of Christ is excellent because His person is excellent.

**The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ
Being Not the Knowledge That Belongs to Christ,
the Knowledge That Christ Himself Has;
Rather, This Knowledge Being
Our Subjective Knowing of Christ**

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is not the knowledge that belongs to Christ, the knowledge that Christ Himself has; rather, this knowledge is our subjective knowing of Christ ([John 17:3](#)). The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is our subjective knowing of Him. [117]

***In Philippians 3:8 Knowledge Actually Meaning
a Revelation, a Vision, concerning Christ and His Excellency***

In [Philippians 3:8](#) *knowledge* actually means a revelation, a vision, concerning Christ and His excellency ([Gal. 1:15-16](#); [Eph. 1:17-23](#)). This knowledge is not an outward vision. We need to see a revelation of the excellency of Christ. It is not an outward but an inward revelation. There are three requirements to see a revelation. The first requirement is related to the word *revelation*, which in Greek is *apocalypsis*, meaning to remove or to open up the veil. Hence, revelation is an unveiling. The second requirement can be seen in [Ephesians 1:17-18](#), in which Paul says, “The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened.” Our spiritual eyes are in our heart. The inward seeing of revelation requires light, which comes only from the Lord Himself. The third requirement is sight, which is also seen in [verses 17 and 18](#). By the unveiling, light, and sight, we see the revelation of the person of Christ. Practically speaking, this involves the Word of God. The light needs to shine on the truth in the Word for us to receive an inward revelation of who Christ is. We thank the Lord that we have the writings of Paul. Without the writings of Paul, we could not have the kind of revelation that we have. When we read these writings and the divine light shines on the facts, on the truth in the Word, and we exercise our spirit to pray with the Word, then we receive a revelation of Christ. Paul says that we need a spirit of revelation. This means that revelation does not come first to us through our mind as knowledge. It comes to us as an inward seeing. This was Paul’s experience, and many of us can testify that it was also our experience. I was quite young when I saw my first glimpse of the revelation of Christ. One revelation is all it took to capture me, and since then I have never looked back. The revelation of Christ absolutely captures a person, causing him to forget everything else, to forget any other pursuit, goal, or dream.

***When Christ Was Revealed to Him by God,
Paul Seeing the Supereminence, the Supreme Preciousness,
and the Surpassing Worth of Christ***

When Christ was revealed to him by God, Paul saw the supereminence, the supreme preciousness, and the surpassing worth of Christ ([Acts 9:3-5](#),

20, 22; 22:13-16; 26:13-16). I love this utterance. What Paul [118] experienced on the road to Damascus was a revelation of Christ. Paul saw Christ Himself.

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Being the Excellency of Christ Realized by Us

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ is the excellency of Christ realized by us (John 16:13-14; Gal. 1:15-16). Christ in His person is already excellent, but we may or may not have realized the excellency of this person. Once we realize it, it is then that we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. In 1:15-16 Paul says, “When it pleased God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me that I might announce Him as the gospel among the Gentiles, immediately I did not confer with flesh and blood.” The burden of this message is that we would see a vision.

Needing to Have a Vision of the Preciousness of Christ and the Excellency of the Knowledge of the All-inclusive, Unlimited Christ

We need to have a vision of the preciousness of Christ and the excellency of the knowledge of the all-inclusive, unlimited Christ (1 Pet. 2:4, 7; Col. 1:12, 15-19; 2:2-3, 9, 16-17; 3:4, 10). We need a vision because the vision that we have will directly determine the experience we have. Our experience will always be less than our vision. It is crucial that we have more vision of Christ because our individual experience could never come up to the standard of the revelation of Christ that we see. For example, if we only know that Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, that He is the Savior of mankind, and that we can receive eternal life if we believe into Him, then the extent of our experience of Him is the redemption of Christ and regeneration. However, Paul’s knowledge and thereby experience of Christ was much more extensive. Every book in the New Testament reveals the all-inclusive, unlimited Christ. In particular, the book of Colossians contains the highest revelation of Christ. I am so thankful that Paul wrote down what he saw of Christ. Let us consider some aspects of Christ in Colossians:

Colossians 1:12 reveals that Christ is the allotted portion of the saints in

the light. In [verse 15](#) Christ is the visible image of the invisible God as well as the Firstborn of all creation. In [verse 17](#) Paul says that Christ “is before all things, and all things cohere in Him.” This means that Christ is [\[119\]](#) the hub, the holding center, of the entire universe. We need to have a greater seeing of Christ. Christ is not only the Lamb and our Savior; He is much greater. We would run out of words in any attempt to fully describe Him. He is all-inclusive and all-extensive. [Verse 18](#) says that Christ is the Head of the Body, that He is the beginning, and that He is the Firstborn from the dead. Have we experienced and enjoyed Christ as the beginning? In [verse 19](#) we see that Christ is the One in whom all the fullness was pleased to dwell.

In [Colossians 2:2](#) Christ is called the mystery of God. God is a mystery. If we want to know God, we must know Christ. [Verse 9](#) reveals that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. This means that the entire Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—with all the divine attributes dwells in Christ bodily. There is a difference between this God-man Jesus Christ and we as God-men—we have God’s life and nature, but we do not have His Godhead. He has many attributes that we do not have, but in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead with all His attributes bodily. In [2:16-17](#) Christ is revealed as the body of all the shadows, which means that He is the reality of every positive thing in the universe. What a Christ!

[Colossians 3:4](#) indicates that Christ is our life. In [3:10-11](#) we see that Christ is all the members of the one new man. Have you seen this Christ? This is the Christ Paul saw, and this is the Christ that captured Paul. This Christ is all-inclusive and all-extensive. [Ephesians 3:18](#) speaks of being “full of strength to apprehend with all the saints what the breadth and length and height and depth are.” In this verse Paul does not speak of any measurement but merely says that Christ is the breadth and length and height and depth, indicating that Christ is unlimited in His dimensions. He is greater than the dimensions of the physical universe. This is our all-inclusive and all-extensive Christ. We need to see more of this Christ. If we do not see more of Him, we cannot experience more of Him. We need to pray, “Lord, grant me a spirit of wisdom and revelation that I may know You in a fuller way.” The more revelation we have of Christ, the more experience and the more enjoyment we could have of Christ.

*The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ
Coming by Revelation;
without the Revelation concerning Christ,*

Our Not Being Able to Know Christ

The excellency of the knowledge of Christ comes by revelation; [120] without the revelation concerning Christ, we cannot know Christ ([Matt. 16:17](#); [11:27](#); [Gal. 1:15-16](#); [John 17:3](#)). Where does the revelation of Christ come from? In [Matthew 16](#) the Lord asked His disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of Man is?” (v. 13). They gave various answers. Then He asked them, “But you, who do you say that I am?” (v. 15). Peter surprised the Lord with his response, because he usually spoke wrongly. However, this time he said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (v. 16). Then Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in the heavens” (v. 17). Therefore, revelation of Christ came from the Father. [Matthew 11:27](#) confirms this, saying, “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one fully knows the Son except the Father; neither does anyone fully know the Father except the Son and him to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” This is why we need to pray and to exercise our spirit in order to see Christ ([Eph. 3:14](#)). Only the Father can reveal Christ to us. This matches what we read earlier in [Galatians 1](#) about what pleases God. In [Galatians 1:15-16](#) we see that it pleases God to reveal His Son in us. Based on this, we can pray, “Lord, do what pleases You—reveal Your Son in me.” He wants to answer such a prayer because it matches His desire; it pleases Him. We need to ask Him to do what pleases Him.

If We Would Experience Christ, Our First Needing to Have the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ

If we would experience Christ, we first need to have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ ([Phil. 3:7-10](#)). Our experience of Christ depends on our realizing the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Once we realize this, we will want to dive into Paul’s Epistles to receive the revelation of Christ. The motivation to pursue Christ comes from a revelation of Christ.

Not Being Able to Experience Christ without Knowing Him through a Revelation of Him

We cannot experience Christ without knowing Him through a revelation

of Him (Gal. 1:15-16; 2:20; 4:19). The sequence of the three reference verses from the book of Galatians is important. In 1:15-16 Christ is revealed in us. Then 2:20 shows that Christ lives in us. His living in us [121] depends on His being revealed in us. Finally, in 4:19 we see that the result of Christ's living in us is His being formed in us. It all begins with the revelation. First, we need to have Christ revealed in us, then Christ lives in us, and eventually, He is formed in us. The three stages of our union with Christ—union, mingling, and incorporation, which is persons indwelling one another—are the result of the revelation of Christ. Christ living and being formed in us begins with revelation, so we need to look to the Lord to show us a higher revelation.

***If We Do Not Have
a Higher Revelation of Christ,
Our Not Being Able to Have
a Higher Experience of Christ***

If we do not have a higher revelation of Christ, we cannot have a higher experience of Christ (1 John 5:20). We all have some revelation and some experience of Christ, but we need a higher revelation of Christ. There is much more of Christ. In these days I have been asking the Lord to show me what Paul saw. I want to have the secret that Paul had. If Paul could have the secret, we also can have it. We do not yet have what Paul has. We are far short of Paul's revelation of Christ and of Paul's experience of Christ. We need to pray for this.

***Our Experience of Christ
Not Being Able to Surpass
the Excellency of Our Knowledge of Christ***

Our experience of Christ cannot surpass the excellency of our knowledge of Christ (Eph. 1:17-21; 3:14-19). This is why we should never ever stop pursuing the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. As soon as we stop receiving the revelation of Christ, our experience will stop. Paul never stopped pursuing. Even when he was a mature believer in Christ, he said, "Brothers, I do not account of myself to have laid hold; but one thing I do: Forgetting the things which are behind and stretching forward to the things which are before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize to which God in Christ Jesus has called me upward" (Phil. 3:13-14). May the Lord put in us such a pursuing spirit. I believe that Paul's pursuing spirit came

from his revelation of Christ. When Paul saw who Christ was, he realized that Christ is worth everything. Paul made Christ his lifelong pursuit, and he gained what he pursued. [122]

**ON ACCOUNT OF (OR BECAUSE OF)
THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST,
PAUL COUNTING ALL THINGS TO BE LOSS**

**Paul Placing Great Value on
the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus;
This Being Indicated by the Words *My Lord*,
Which Convey His Intimate, Tender Feelings
concerning Christ**

On account of (or because of) the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Paul counted all things to be loss (v. 8a). Paul placed great value on the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; this is indicated by the words *my Lord*, which convey his intimate, tender feelings concerning Christ. In 3:8 Paul says, “Moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ.” Christ meant much to Paul; thus, his use of the words *my Lord* conveys his intimate, tender feelings concerning Christ.

**Paul’s Eyes Being Opened to See
the Excellency of the Wonderful, All-inclusive Christ;
on Account of This Excellency,
His Counting as Loss All Things,
Whether They Related to Religious Gain or Natural Gain**

Paul’s eyes were opened to see the excellency of the wonderful, all-inclusive Christ; on account of this excellency, he counted as loss all things, whether they related to religious gain or natural gain.

**In Verse 8 *All Things* Indicating That
Paul Dropped Not Only Religious Things but All Things
on Account of the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus;
Thus, to Paul, the Loss of All Things**

Being the Loss of Everything

In [verse 8](#) *all things* indicates that Paul dropped not only religious things but all things on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus; thus, to Paul, the loss of all things was the loss of everything. Surely it was not too much for Paul to drop all things on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Stanza 3 of *Hymns*, #473 says, “Arise! the holy bargain strike—/ The fragment for the whole.” Paul [123] would say, “I traded refuse for Christ. That is the holy bargain.” Whether or not we consider the loss of all things to be a holy bargain depends on our valuation of Christ.

The More We Have the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ, the More Our Counting as Loss Everything Religious and Natural

The more we have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, the more we will count as loss everything religious and natural ([vv. 4-8a](#)).

ON ACCOUNT OF CHRIST, PAUL SUFFERING THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS AND COUNTING THEM AS REFUSE IN ORDER TO GAIN CHRIST

On account of Christ, Paul suffered the loss of all things and counted them as refuse in order to gain Christ ([vv. 7, 8b](#)). This major section tells us that Paul’s goal was to gain the Christ he saw. It is one thing to see Christ; it is another thing to possess Christ, to gain Christ, to own Christ. Like shopping, it is one thing to see the merchandise, but it is another thing to buy it. If we want to own it, we cannot merely look at it; we must pay the price for it. The merchandise we see and want is not free. Likewise, when we read the Bible to see the revelation of Christ, we should not treat it as if we were window shopping. Once we see the revelation of Christ, it should motivate us to pay whatever the cost is to gain Christ. The cost will differ for each one, but in principle, the cost is all things. If we are not prepared to pay all things, we need a revelation of Christ. If we truly see the value of Christ, we will realize that we are not paying nearly enough. I do not have enough to pay. If I paid everything, it would not be nearly enough, because I realize that I am going to gain this Christ whom I have seen. That is what motivated Paul. That is what needs to motivate us.

On account of Christ, Paul not only counted all things to be loss but also suffered the loss of all things. It is easy for us to say that we count all things as loss, but when the loss comes, we may not be prepared to actually lose it. However, it does not work that way. Once we count something as loss, we will lose it. The Lord will wait until we count it as loss; then we will be ready to lose it. That is how it worked with Paul. He suffered the loss of all things and counted them as refuse in order to gain Christ.

The word *gain* implies that we will pay a price for Christ. To see a revelation of Christ may cost us something, but to gain Christ is very costly. [124] But whether we consider the price we pay as costly depends on how we value Christ. Some people value diamonds, and some people do not. I am not willing to pay much for a diamond because it is not worth much to me, but someone who loves diamonds will sell everything they have to obtain a special diamond. That is how we need to be with Christ. Once we see Christ, we will realize that He is worth everything because we know who and what He is.

It is for this reason that the preaching of the gospel requires the hearing of faith. We need to have some understanding of who Christ is. As an unbeliever we have no faith, and because we have no faith, we do not value Christ at all. When we hear the gospel of Christ, we have some realization of who this Christ is. Through the hearing of faith we are saved, grow, and continue to experience Christ. The hearing of faith does not merely mean listening to people speak about Christ. We can receive the hearing of faith just by praying God's words. This will infuse us with an appreciation of Christ. Once we have the appreciation of Christ, we will do anything to gain that Christ.

***All Things in Verse 8 Including the Things of
Religion, Philosophy, and Culture;
Paul Suffering the Loss of All These Things
Because They Were Substitutes for Christ,
Hooks Used by Satan to Keep People from Christ
and the Experience of Christ***

All things in verse 8 includes the things of religion, philosophy, and culture; Paul suffered the loss of all these things because they were substitutes for Christ, hooks used by Satan to keep people from Christ and the experience of Christ. Philosophy can certainly be a substitute for Christ; it governs our thinking and our behavior. There is no room for

Christ in those who are philosophical. Culture also can be a substitute for Christ. These are hooks used by Satan to keep people from Christ and from the experience of Christ.

**Our Gaining Christ by Suffering the Loss of All Things
That Were Once a Gain for Us
and by Counting Them as Refuse**

*The Greek Word for Gain in Verse 8
Meaning “to Secure, to Obtain, to Lay Hold of”*

We gain Christ by suffering the loss of all things that were once a gain [125] for us and by counting them as refuse (vv. 4, 8). The Greek word for *gain* in [verse 8](#) means “to secure, to obtain, to lay hold of.” When Paul said that he wanted to gain Christ, he meant that he wanted to lay hold of Christ. In [3:12](#) he says, “Not that I have already obtained or am already perfected, but I pursue, if even I may lay hold of that for which I also have been laid hold of by Christ Jesus.” The Christian life is our possessing Him, gaining Him, and laying hold of Him.

*To Gain Christ Being to Gain His Person,
to Experience, Enjoy, and Take Possession of
All His Unsearchable Riches*

To gain Christ is to gain His person, to experience, enjoy, and take possession of all His unsearchable riches ([Eph. 3:8](#)). We need to learn from Paul. When Paul speaks about Christ in [Ephesians 3:8](#), he does not just say that Christ is rich. Rather, he speaks of the unsearchable riches of Christ. His riches are so great that we could not describe them.

*Like Paul, Our Needing to Not Only Count
All Things as Loss on Account of Christ
but Also Suffer the Loss of All Things
and Count All Things as Refuse*

Like Paul, we should not only count all things as loss on account of Christ ([Phil. 3:7](#)) but also suffer the loss of all things and count all things as refuse (v. 8). We should not be afraid of the loss of all things. We should look not at the price but at the prize. The prize is much greater than the

price. If we see the prize, the price will mean nothing to us.

***The More We Suffer the Loss of All Things
and Count Them as Refuse on Account of Christ,
the More Our Gaining Christ
for Our Experience and Enjoyment***

The more we suffer the loss of all things and count them as refuse on account of Christ, the more we will gain Christ for our experience and enjoyment (vv. 7-8). The emphasis in this message is not about suffering the loss of all things. The main point of this fellowship is that the revelation of Christ will motivate us to pursue Christ. Many of us can testify of this. Once I saw Christ, I was captured. The cost or consequences, whatever they were, did not matter. We all need to open ourselves to see Christ. Then we will be motivated to pursue Christ. This will cause us to [126] experience and enjoy Christ. When we enjoy Christ, we become a little crazy. We will no longer pay attention to things such as price. Our enjoyment of Christ makes everything worthwhile.—M. R.